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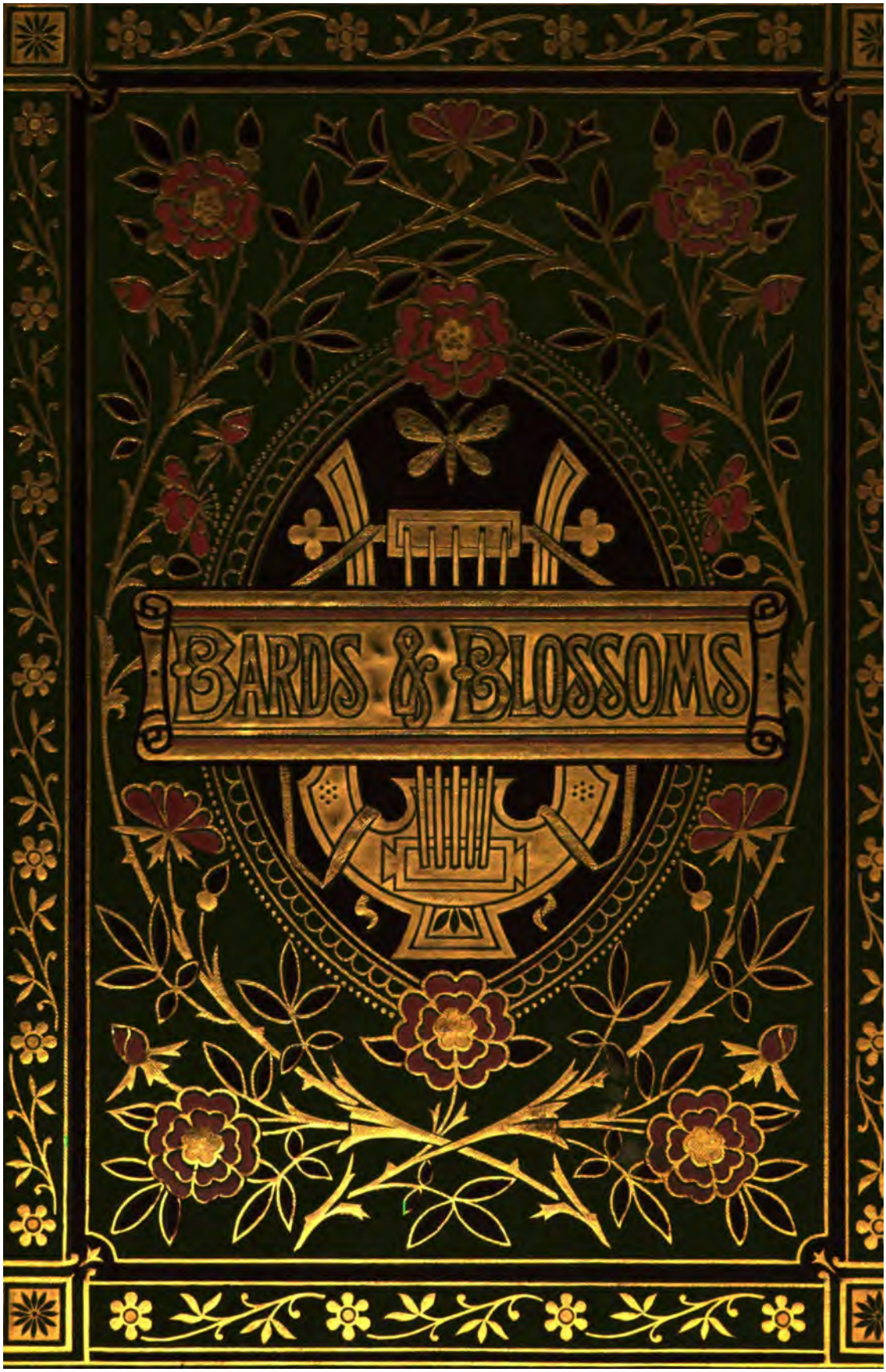
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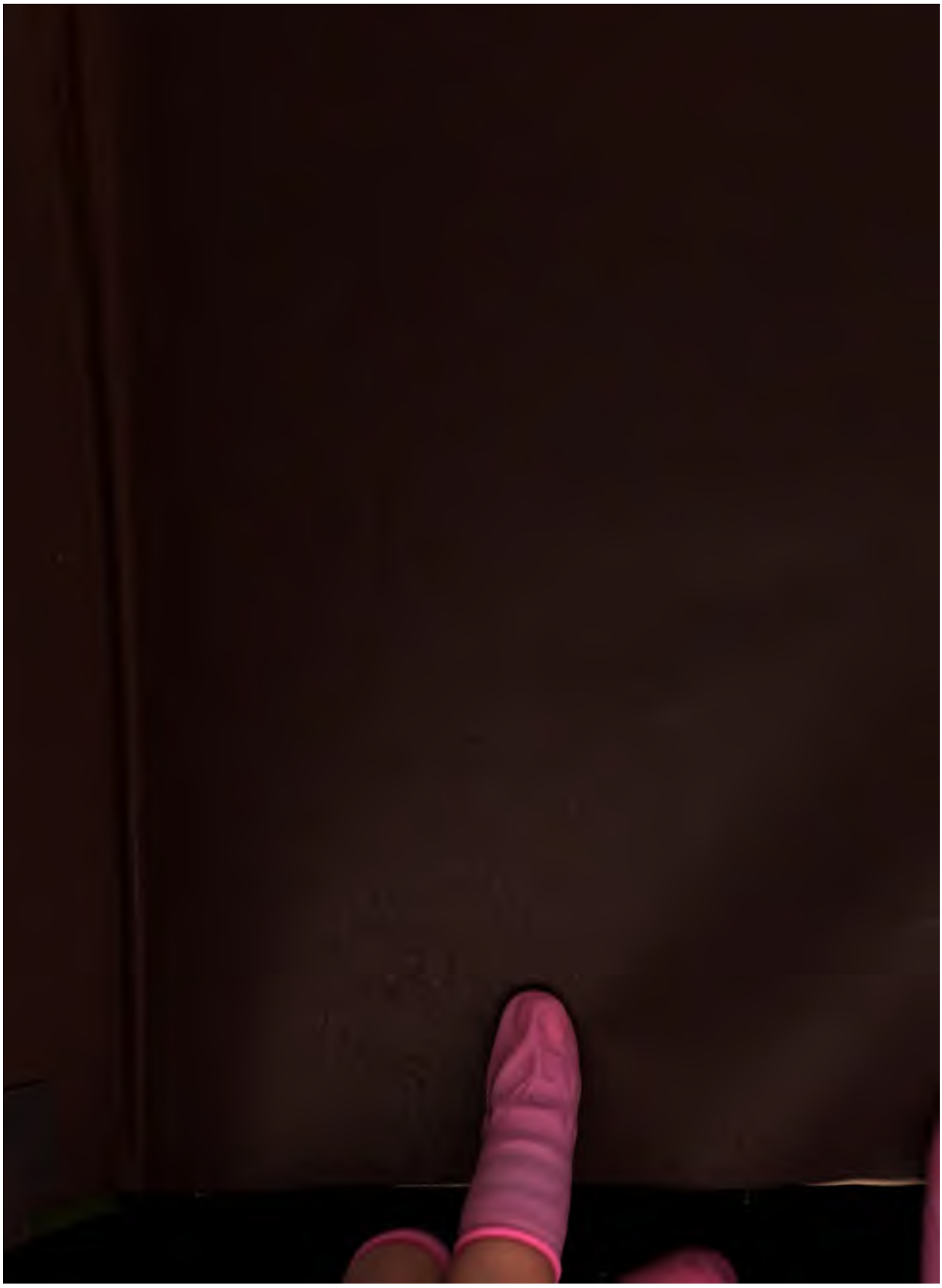
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PRIMROSE.
Ask me why I send you here
This firstling of the infant year;
Ask me why I send to you
This Primrose all bepearled with dew;
I straight will whisper in your ears,
The sweets of love are washed with tears.
Ask me why this flower doth show
So yellow, green, and sickly too;
Ask me why the stalk is weak,
And bending, yet it doth not break;
I must tell you, these discover
What doubts and fears are in a lover
THOMAS CAREW.

BARDS AND BLOSSOMS

OR

The Poetry, History, and Associations of Flowers

BY

F. EDWARD HULME, F.L.S., F.S.A.

AUTHOR OF "THE PRINCIPLES OF ORNAMENTAL ART," "PLANTS: THEIR NATURAL GROWTH AND ORNAMENTAL TREATMENT," &c.





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BARDS AND BLOSSOMS.

CHAPTER I.

NATURE, ever impressive to the mind capable of being impressed, appeals to us in many ways. At times it soothes by its tranquil loveliness, as in some pastoral scene where all is bathed in sunlight, and the deep calm of nature, only emphasised by the drowsy humming of the insect-world, asserts itself, and bids us put away for the time the anxieties of life and all its turmoil to bask for a while in the felt sunshine of God's presence. At other times it exhilarates the spirits by its life, as when we walk along the breezy cliff while the gently-heaving ocean at our feet sparkles and flashes in the light. Or, again as in the rush of the avalanche, the roar of the thunder as it reverberates from cloud to cloud amidst the murky darkness that seems even more painfully intensified on the withdrawal of the blinding flash, or in the sullen booming of the ocean waves as they dash tumultuously against the rocky coast, the powers of nature appear well-nigh irresistible. Then we stand awe-struck and humbled before such mighty forces, and feel little surprise that in the earlier ages of the world, or amongst peoples possessing no

higher revelation, the earth, the air, and the sea should be the homes of deities to be conciliated and adored.

A general love of nature in its countless lovely phases, and an appreciation in detail of those forms that the great Creator Himself declared to be "very good," is a feeling to be diligently sought, a possession to be highly prized when attained. We do not, in our present labours, propose to embrace so wide a theme, though there is little doubt that the man who specially devotes himself to some particular branch of study generally is, and always should be, able to enlarge his sympathies beyond those bounds that he has set himself, and to travel with due appreciation into a wider domain. The geologist will appreciate the labours of the botanist, though a certain idiosyncrasy has led him to prefer for himself another aspect of nature; while the astronomer, peering into infinite space, and endeavouring to understand something of the mighty scheme of the universe as he watches, night by night, the revolutions of the worlds as they circle in their march around the throne of God, has a common ground of sympathy with the man who sees no less the wonderful perfection of an ever-present Deity in the feathering of an insect's wing, or the delicate moulding of forms that, like the shells found in chalk formations, are quite invisible to the unaided eye, but that nevertheless have a refinement of beauty, a grace and delicacy of form, that larger objects, and things of greater importance, as we should ignorantly term them, can scarcely excel, or even attain to. A true love of nature will not suffer itself to be confined too rigidly within certain narrow bounds, though, owing to the infinity of the wonders of creation, a certain limitation of study is both necessary and commendable; while such a love, if sincere—the admiration of the infinite perfection, and not the petty complacency of self-glorification—will appreciate fully, almost painfully, how little of all these wonders it can comprehend, how little it is given to the creatures of a day, whose life is as a vapour, to peer into the

mind of Him whose dominion endureth throughout the countless ages of the past, the eternity of the future; and he will feel like Newton, the ideal man of science, that while men may blaze abroad the fame of his discoveries, it well becomes him to be humble in view of that vast and boundless ocean that lies beyond his ken.

Our present desire is to dwell upon one phase only of the wonderful works of nature, and to this end we limit our consideration to the vegetable kingdom, being well persuaded that in the study of these lower forms there is ample pleasure to be derived, ample profit to be gained. Should we not succeed in leading our readers to this conclusion, the blame will but be in him who writes, and not from any lack inherent to the theme. Fair Nature will be no less fair because her self-appointed exponent failed to rise to the height of his great argument. Our studies have necessarily, in the past, been much in this direction; and, in the course of our reading on this and kindred subjects, it has occurred to us that a collection, even though necessarily an imperfect one, of the thoughts of great minds of the past, would possess a value and interest of its own; and on the formation of such a collection we here, as a labour of love, enter—our own share of the work being therefore little else than the gathering in of the golden harvest that others have already prepared to our hands.

The study of plants will take one of three directions: the beauty so freely spread around us may be lost sight of in the consideration of utility; or this beauty may itself be the end and aim; or, thirdly, it may be made subordinate to and suggestive of a higher and spiritual beauty. The first view is the practical or utilitarian one, the second is the æsthetic, and the third the symbolic. The fox-hunter, who only saw in violets a nuisance as spoiling scent; the well-known and oft-quoted man to whom a primrose by the river's brim was but a yellow primrose, a thing living a very useless life and nothing more; and the agriculturist, who very legitimately, in

the course of his business, covers acres of ground with the rich crimson of the clover or the deep pink of the sanfoin, or equally legitimately inveighs against the rich masses of yellow charlock or scarlet poppy[1] that spring up amidst his crops and mock his toil, may all be considered as supplying examples of the first class, wherein we see the subordination of beauty to use. The quaint lines of old Tusser abound with illustrations; of these, however, we need but give one example, a stanza in praise of the hop—

> "The hop for his profit I thus do exalt,
> It strengtheneth drink, and it savoureth malt;
> And being well brewed, long kept it will last,
> And drawing abide—if you draw not too fast."

Examples of the second class, the æsthetic love of plants, are by no means difficult to find, and we need not here dwell long upon them, as our readers will have no difficulty in selecting many such, both from the following pages, and as the result of their own literary experience. The two following examples, the first from Cowper and the second from Sir Walter Scott, will here suffice to illustrate the class:—

> "The common, overgrown with fern, and rough
> With prickly gorse, that, shapeless and deformed,
> And dangerous to the touch, has yet its bloom,
> And decks itself with ornaments of gold,
> Yields no unpleasant ramble."

> "The rude stone fence, with fragrant wallflowers gay,
> To me more pleasure yields
> Than all the pomp imperial domes display."

The third class, the symbolic study of plants, is illustrated by many noble passages in our poets. The plant that to the utilitarian is but fodder, and to the sensuous eye a form of beauty, has to these

---

[1] See notes at end of text for this and other following references, marked numerically.

an added and inner charm, and the commonest weed to such a man becomes sacramental, a symbol of the all-embracing love of God. The lines of Cowper form a good illustration of this phase of our subject:—

"There lives and works
A soul in all things, and that soul is God.
The beauties of the wilderness are His,
That make so gay the solitary place,
Where no eye sees them. And the fairer forms
That cultivation glories in are His.
He sets the bright procession on its way,
And marshals all the order of the year;
He marks the bounds which winter may not pass,
And blunts its pointed fury; in its case,
Russet and rude, folds up the tender germ,
Uninjured, with inimitable art,[2]
And, ere one flowering season fades and dies,
Designs the blooming wonders of the next.
The Lord of all, Himself through all diffused,
Sustains, and is the life of all that lives.[3]
Nature is but a name for an effect,
Whose cause is God. Not a flower
But shows some touch, in freckle, streak, or stain,
Of His unrivalled pencil. He inspires
Their balmy odours, and imparts their hues,
And bathes their eyes with nectar, and includes,
In grains as countless as the sea-side sands,
The forms with which He sprinkles all the earth.
Happy who walks with Him! whom what he finds
Of flavour or of scent in fruit or flower,
Or what he views of beautiful or grand
In nature, from the broad majestic oak
To the green blade that twinkles in the sun,
Prompts with remembrance of a present God.
In the vast and the minute he sees
The unambiguous footsteps of the God
Who gives its lustre to an insect's wing,
And wheels His throne upon the rolling worlds."

The works of Milton, Wordsworth, Herrick, Barton, and many others, afford numerous fine examples of this, the highest form of study of which, as we have seen, our subject admits, and to their labours we can ever turn with enjoyment; for of such work we can truly say, with Channing, that its tendency is "to carry the mind beyond and above the beaten, dusty, weary walks of ordinary life, to lift it into a purer element, and to breathe into it more profound and generous emotion. It reveals to us the loveliness of nature, brings back the freshness of youthful feeling, revives the relish of simple pleasures, and keeps unquenched the enthusiasm which warmed the spring-time of our being."[4]

Pursuing our work now more in detail, we propose to arrange our subject-matter as follows:—1. A reference to what may be termed the practical side, quoting from the poets divers allusions to the domestic uses in the household of our common plants, or to country customs in which they find a place. 2. The joy that is derivable from the beauty of natural growth on its own merits. 3. The inner meaning that is derivable, whether in heraldic or historic sense, as in the rose of the Tudors, or in that higher symbolic sense, that sees in the perishing things of earth some reflex of the kingdom that abideth.

In all descriptions of the country life the poets largely refer to that wealth of floral beauty that is scattered so bountifully throughout our land, decking alike the dusty road-side, the hedge-row, the meadow, and the quiet pool with forms of loveliness, and possessing to the dwellers in the country an added interest from their association with their daily life, the marriage festival, or the last sad offices of respect to the departed. How commonly, for instance, do we find the little pimpernel, or shepherd's weather-glass, appealed to as a guide to the weather that may be looked for, its fully-expanded ruddy blossom being accepted as a sign of sunny skies to come, and its closed or barely-opened petals a proof that

ere long the heavens will grow black with clouds bearing refreshing rain to the thirsty land!

> "That tiny scarlet flower,
> With eye of lustrous amethyst adorned,
> Endued with prescience of the stormy hour—
> Meek pimpernel;
> Whose closing lids wise shepherd never scorned,
> But heeds them well."
>
> *Merritt.*

Though the name, probably in a large degree from these associations, has in itself a pleasant and poetical sound, we find on analysing it that it is prosaic enough, being merely derived from two Latin words signifying "twice-winged," in allusion to the double series of small leaves borne on its stem. The plant is in France called *pimprenelle*, while the Italians know it as the *pimpinella*—a curious similarity of names. It will no doubt be known to our readers that the botanical names of plants are accepted by all men of science alike, irrespective of nationality; but the local and familiar names of plants will ordinarily differ, not only in each country, but even in many districts of the same country, the leading exceptions to this rule being either when the name is a direct corruption of its scientific title, or when the knowledge of the plant is widely diffused, as in the case of rice—French, *riz;* Italian, *riso;* Spanish, *arroz;* German, *reis;* Dutch, *rijst;* Danish, *riis;* Swedish, *ris;* Russian, *riss;* Arabic, *aruz;* Tamil, *arisee*—owing to its being a valuable commercial product in the markets of the world. Neither of these explanations in the present case suffice to account for the similarity of names amongst the English, French, and Italian-speaking peoples, as its botanical name, *anagallis*, is quite unlike the more familiar appellation, while it certainly has no claim to rank as one of the benefactors of mankind beyond its barometric influence, an influence scarcely to be quoted in the busy scenes of commercial intercourse. The rather repellant name *anagallis*

"bears yet a precious jewel in its head," and is really far more poetic than the more sweetly-sounding pimpernel, being compounded of two Greek words signifying "again" and "to adorn;" in allusion to the readornment, year by year, of the waste places, fields, and road-sides with its beautiful blossoms. Though we have many pink and crimson flowers, the pimpernel and the poppy are the only two species that deck themselves in pure scarlet, though occasionally the pimpernel may be found with blossoms of a pure cerulean blue, or more rarely quite white. This lovely little flower is almost cosmopolitan in its range, being found throughout the temperate and sub-tropical regions of both hemispheres, and as much at home in Cashmere, Japan, Egypt, and Mexico as in the cornfields and hedgerows of England. Several other plants, as the goat's-beard and garden marigold, have the same property of closing on the approach of rain, though they have failed to attract the same attention to their warnings. Other almost equally familiar country weather prognostics are found in the following, which, though somewhat foreign to our subject, have an interest and undoubted value, and we therefore need scarcely apologise for deviating thus temporarily from the track:—Spiders are more visible, as they leave their webs and wander about; ditches, if at all foul, become distinctly odorous; distant hills are more distinct than usual; swallows, instead of soaring in the air, fly close to the ground; fish are more active; frogs, a bright yellow in settled weather, assume a darker and duller colour.

The quiet peace of a country life, and the air of calm that seems so naturally to belong to the dwellers in these rustic scenes, are points on which our poets love to dwell, and the pursuits in which they engage are touched upon with a loving interest.

> "To study culture, and with useful toil
> To meliorate and tame the stubborn soil;

To give dissimilar, yet fruitful lands,
The grain, or herb, or plant that each demands;
To mark the matchless workings of the power
That shoots within the seed of future flower;
Bids these in elegance of form excel,
In colour these, and these delight the smell;—
These, these are arts pursued without a crime,
That leave no stain upon the wings of Time."

Cowper.

The cottage garden, so often bearing signs of the care bestowed upon it, in the rich masses of blossoms that gladden the eye of the passer-by, with its old-fashioned but no less beautiful flowers—columbines, wallflowers, stocks, sweetwilliams, crown imperials, and many others that, though now banished from the parterres of the wealthy, are little, if at all, inferior to the novelties that have supplanted them[5]—has not escaped the observant eye, nor are its culinary products deemed unworthy of a passing regard. Tusser, whose productions have perhaps more rhyme in them than poetry, enters very largely into such matters, and with a quaint directness that has its charm, though possibly one example will be found quite sufficient—

"Maids, mustard-seed gather fore being too ripe,
And weather it well yer ye give it a stripe;
Then dress it and lay it in soller up sweet,
Least foistiness make it for table unmeet;"

while Dryden, with a courage that we cannot but admire, even ventures to introduce the altogether unpoetic cabbage into his description, though impelled to use another term for it—

"She took the coleworts which her husband got
From his own ground, a small well-watered spot;
She stripped the stalks of all their leaves; the best
She culled, and then with handy care she dressed."

The poetic modification—the culling of colewort instead of cutting a cabbage—is rather amusing, though Dryden was undoubtedly

right, in the description of such a rural scene, in selecting a good old English word in place of a term of foreign origin, cabbage being derived from the Latin *caput*, a head, while colewort is pure Anglo-Saxon—*cawl-wyrt, i.e.*, the plant with large stalks.

Gay, in mock-heroic verse, ventures to sing the praise of the turnip, though rather, it would appear, from the associations it awakens than from any other cause—

"Leeks to the Welsh, to Dutchmen butter's dear,
Of Irish swains potato is the cheer;
Oats for their feasts the Scottish shepherds grind,
Sweet turnips are the food of Blonzalind:
While she loves turnips, butter I despise,
Nor leeks, nor oatmeal, nor potato prize."

The opening and closing of the flowers of the garden and the field have attracted the attention both of botanists and villagers. The great Linnæus endeavoured to devise a floral clock, the time of day, hour after hour, to be indicated by the opening or closing of some blossom, and the same idea is embodied in the following lines:—

"In every copse and sheltered dell,
Unveiled to the observant eye,
Are faithful monitors, who tell
How pass the hours and seasons by.

"The green-robed children of the spring
Will mark the periods as they pass,
Mingle with leaves Time's feathered wing,
And bind with flowers his silent glass.

"Mark where transparent waters glide,
Soft flowing o'er their tranquil bed;
There, cradled on the dimpling tide,
Nymphæa[v] rests her lovely head:

"But, conscious of the earliest beam,
She rises from her humid nest,
And sees reflected on the stream
The virgin whiteness of her breast—

"Till the bright day-star to the west
Declines, in Ocean's surge to lave;
Then, folded in her modest vest,
She slumbers on the rocking wave.[7]

"See Hieracium's various tribe,[8]
Of plumy seed and radiate flowers;
The course of time their blooms describe,
And wake or sleep appointed hours.

"Broad o'er its imbricated cup
The goat's-beard[9] spreads its golden rays,
But shuts its cautious petals up,
Retreating from the noontide blaze.

"Pale as a pensive cloistered nun,
The Bethlehem Star[10] her face unveils,
When o'er the mountain peers the sun,
But shades it from the vesper gales.

"Among the loose and arid sands
The humble Arenaria[11] creeps;
Slowly the purple star expands,
But soon within the calyx sleeps.

"And those small bells, so lightly rayed
With young Aurora's rosy hue,
Are to the noontide sun displayed,
But shut their plaits against the dew.

"On upland slopes the shepherds mark
The hour when, as the dial true,
Cichorium[12] to the towering lark
Lifts her soft eyes, serenely blue.

"And thou, 'wee crimson-tippèd flower,'[13]
Gather'st thy fringèd mantle round
Thy bosom at the closing hour,
When night-drops bathe the turfy ground.

"Unlike Silene,[14] who declines
The garish noontide's blazing light,
But, when the evening crescent shines,
Gives all her sweetness to the night.

"Thus in each flower and simple bell,
That in our path betrodden lie,
Are sweet remembrances that tell
How fast the wingèd moments fly."

The medicinal value of the herbs of garden and field was not overlooked; and even the painful remedy of the birchen rod has found its place in our poetry. Phillips speaks of the

"Afflictive birch,
Cursed by unlettered, idle youth;"

while Shenstone, in his admirable poem on the village schoolmistress, again and again recurs to its efficacy.

"In every village marked with little spire,
Embowered in trees, and hardly known to fame,
There dwells, in lowly shed and mean attire,
A matron old, whom we schoolmistress name,
Who boasts unruly brats with birch to tame;
They grieven sore, in piteous durance pent,
Awed by the pow'r of this relentless dame;
And often-times, on vagaries idly bent,
For unkempt hair, or task unconned, are sorely shent.

"And all in sight doth rise a birchen tree,
Which learning near her little dome did stow;
Whilom a twig of small regard to see,
Though now so wide its waving branches flow,
And work the simple vassals mickle woe;
For not a wind might curl the leaves that blew,
But their limbs shuddered and their pulse beat low;
And, as they looked, they found their horror grew,
And shaped it into rods, and tingled at the view.

. . . . . .

"Her cap, far whiter than the driven snow,
Emblem right meet of decency does yield;
Her apron dyed in grain, as blue, I trow,
As is the harebell that adorns the field;
And in her hand, for sceptre, she does wield

Tway birchen sprays; with anxious fear entwined,
With dark distrust, and sad repentance filled;
And steadfast hate, and sharp affliction joined,
And fury uncontrolled, and chastisement unkind.

. . . . . .

"Right well she knew each temper to descry,
To thwart the proud, and the submiss to raise;
Some with vile copper prize exalt on high,
And some entice with pittance small of praise;
And other some with baleful sprig she frays;
Ev'n absent, she the reins of power doth hold,
While with quaint arts the giddy crowd she sways;
Forewarned, if little bird their pranks behold,
'Twill whisper in her ear, and all the scene unfold."

Gerarde, a writer in Queen Elizabeth's reign, tells us that this remedy for youthful depravity was in high favour in his time. In speaking of it, he says that "schoolmasters and parents do terrifie their children with rods made of birch."

Leaving, however, this medicine of the mind for those, the mission of which was to act more exclusively and directly on the corporeal frame, we find again that Shenstone, in his elaborate description of the rural home, does not omit to notice the little plots of herbs that furnish the simple remedies of the poor.

"Herbs too she knew, and well of each could speak,
That in her garden sipped the silv'ry dew,
Where no vain flower disclosed a gaudy streak;[15]
But herbs for use, and physic, not a few,
Of gray renown, within those borders grew;
The tufted basil,[16] pun-provoking thyme,
Fresh balm,[17] and marygold of cheerful hue;
The lowly gill,[18] that never dares to climb;
And more I fain would sing, disdaining here to rhyme.

"Yet cuphrasy[19] may not be left unsung,
That gives dim eyes to wander leagues around;
And pungent radish, biting infants' tongue;
And plantain ribbed,[20] that heals the reaper's wound;
And marj'ram sweet,[21] in shepherd's posie found;

And lavender, whose spikes of azure bloom
Shall be ere while in arid bundles bound,
To lurk amidst the labours of her loom,
And crown her kerchiefs clean with mickle rare perfume."

It would be impossible to dwell at any length upon the medicinal properties of our flora, seeing that there are few plants indeed that are not credited in rural belief with possessing some virtue or power. The borage was held to impart courage to those who tasted it, hence the old adage—

"I, Borage, bring always courage;"

while the name itself is derived from the words *cor*, the heart, and *ago*, to bring, thence corrupted into borage. The Welsh name for the plant signifies herb of gladness.

"Borage and hellebore fill two scenes,
Sovereign plants to purge the veins
Of melancholy, and cheer the heart
Of those black fumes which make it smart."
Burton, "Anatomy of Melancholy."

The poppy was held to be a sedative. Clare speaks of

"Corn poppies, that in crimson dwell,
Called headaches, from their sickly smell."

The virtue of the lettuce, as a provocative of sleep, is referred to by Pope—

"For want of rest,
Lettuce and Cowslip, probatum est."

The betony was at one time held to be almost a panacea for all the ills that flesh is heir to. The old adage, "Sell your coat and buy betony," is an illustration of this; while the expression, having "as many virtues as betony," was held to imply an almost ideal perfection.

The vervain has, in almost all ages, had great and mystical powers assigned to it. The Greeks called it the Holy Herb, and it was held in like esteem by the Romans. The Druids held it second

in esteem to the still more sacred mistletoe. Its virtues are thus referred to by Mason :—

"Lift your boughs of vervain blue,
Dipt in gold September dew;
And dash the moisture, chaste and clear,
O'er the ground, and through the air;
Now the place is purged and pure."

All its reputed effects on both the minds and bodies of men, its medicinal no less than its magical powers, appear to have no real foundation. It is

"Only sweet and delicate,
Fit for young women; and is like the Herb St. John,
Doth neither good nor hurt; but that's all one;
For if they but conceive it doth, it doth;
And it is that physicians hold the chief
In all their cures—conceit and strong belief."

The common fumitory was, throughout the middle ages, used as the principal ingredient in a wash for removing freckles and rendering the complexion clearer. This use of it is thus alluded to by the poet Clare :—

"And fumitory, too, a name
Which superstition holds to fame;
Whose red and purple-mottled flowers
Are cropped by maids in weeding hours,
To boil in water, milk or whey,
For washes on a holiday,
To make their beauty fair and sleek,
And scare the tan from summer's cheek;
And oft the dame will feel inclined,
As childhood's memory comes to mind,
To turn her hook away, and spare
The blooms it loved to gather there."

The economic uses of our plants have not escaped the notice of our poets. Of these the well-known lines of Spenser are perhaps the best exemplification—

"The trees so straight and high—
The sailing pine;[22] the cedar, proud and tall;

The vineprop elm;[23] the poplar never dry;[24]
The builder oak, sole king of forests all;
The aspen, good for staves; the cypress, funeral;[25]
The laurel, meed of mighty conquerors
And poets sage; the fir, that weepeth still;
The willow, worn of forlorn paramour;[26]
The yew,[27] obedient to the bender's will;
The birch for shafts, the sallow for the mill;[28]
The myrtle sweet, bleeding in the bitter wound;
The warlike beech;[29] the ash, for nothing ill;[30]
The fruitful olive, and the plantain[31] round;
The carver holm,[32] the maple seldom sound."[33]

The oak, monarch of British woods, receives its due share of regard, and the supremacy of the oak-built navy of Albion has been the theme of many a patriotic lay.

"Let India boast her plants, nor envy we
The weeping amber and the balmy tree;
While by our oaks the precious loads are borne,
And realms commanded which those trees adorn."

Pope.

The grand duration of the oak, as generation after generation of mankind passes away from beneath its shade, is equally well touched upon by Dryden—

"The monarch oak, the patriarch of trees,
Shoots rising up, and spreads by slow degrees
Three centuries he grows, and three he stays
Supreme in state, and in three more decays."

Naturally flowers enter largely into the festivities of rural life, and adorn by their simple beauty the scenes of rejoicing, the rustic marriage, the bygone joys of May-day, the deeper joys of harvest In connection with the first, Spenser enumerates—

'The violet, pallid blue;
The little dazie, that at evening closes;
The virgin lillie, and the primrose true,
With store of vermeil roses,
To deck their bridegroom's posies;"

while Ben Jonson is still more lavish, and appears upon the scene with quite a mass of floral splendour[34]—

> "Bring corn-flag, tulip, and Adonis-flower,
> Fair ox-eye, goldy-locks, and columbine;
> Pinks, goulans, king-cups, and sweet sops-in-wine;
> Blue harebells, paigles, pansies, calaminth,
> Flower-gentle, and the fair-haired hyacinth;
> Bring rich carnations, fleur-de-luces, lilies."

Many flowers, such as the rose and the forget-me-not, are identified with the tender passion, and owe some at least of their interest to the associations they kindle in consequence. We certainly shall not here attempt to define what varying attributes of flowers render them in turn individually most expressive of the varying phases of those who are led captive, nor attempt to compete with the multitudinous modern versions of the *Language of Flowers*—versions that do not even agree amongst themselves, and are likely therefore, we should imagine, to lead those who confide in them into many a pitfall, and in any case to render the presentation of a bouquet a thing of infinite peril. In olden days matters do not seem to have had the appearance of having been reduced to so rigid a science; hence, in accordance with the old adage, "sweets to the sweet," it was sufficient to choose beautiful flowers in honour of her whose charms had smitten their hearts, without too closely defining what added weight of meaning each additional contribution would involve. Thus Milton, in his poems, says—

> "The shepherds at their festivals
> Carol her good deeds loud in rustic lays,
> And throw sweet garland wreaths into the stream,
> Of pancies, pinks, and gaudy daffodils;"

while Quarles speaks of the "love-sick swains," who, in honour of the fair ones of their choice—

"Compose rush-rings and myrtle-berry chains,
And, stuck with glorious king-cups in their bonnets,
Adorned with laurel slips, chaunt their love sonnets."

The bursting forth of the buds, the lengthening days, and the sunshine of May, all prove that at last the winter is over and gone;[85] and as in Autumn we watch one by one the falling leaves, or see them eddying before the furious and all-searching blast, we are irresistibly reminded that we all do fade as the leaf, and that for us too the day is surely coming when our place shall know us no more for ever; so the awaking of nature on the approach of Spring reminds us of a glorious resurrection—that this corruption must put on incorruption, and this mortal body be clothed in immortality.

"The bursting buds look up,
And greet the sunlight while it lingers yet
On the warm hill-side; and the violet
Opens her azure cup
Meekly, and countless wild-flowers wake to fling
Their earliest incense on the gales of spring.

"Continual songs arise
From universal nature; birds and streams
Mingle their voices, and the glad earth seems
A second paradise!
Thrice blessèd Spring! thou bearest gifts divine;
Sunshine, and song, and fragrance, all are thine!

"Nor unto earth alone;
Thou hast a blessing for the human heart,
Balm for its wounds, and healing for its smart,
Telling of Winter flown,
And bringing hope upon thy rainbow wing;
Type of eternal life—thrice blessèd Spring!"

Burleigh.

At almost all periods, and amongst all people, the returning spring has been a period of joy and gladness. Amongst the Romans this was the season of the *Floralia*, or floral festival. The

Druids held special assemblies in its praise and honour. The Saxons called the month of May *Tri-milchi;* for, owing to the returning verdure covering the land, their herds could be milked three times a-day. In the middle ages more particularly, however, was the festival of May observed; the first day of the month—May-day, as it was more specially called—being that on which the greatest rejoicings were held: churches were decked with garlands, the May-pole formed the centre round which the young men and maidens danced,[86] while young and old alike found pastime in some one or other of the holiday observances of the day. Chaucer, one of the great authorities in these matters, tells us in his "Court of Love" how all on this day go forth—

"To fetch the floures freshe, and braunche and blome;
And namely hawthorne brought both page and grome,
With freshe garlandes, partye blew and white;"

while in his "Romance of the Rose" he says—

"Hard is his heart that loveth nought
In May, when al this mirth is wrought."

In his "Assembly of Foules," the joys of the earthly May, its freshness and beauty, are selected as a type of the heavenly Paradise—

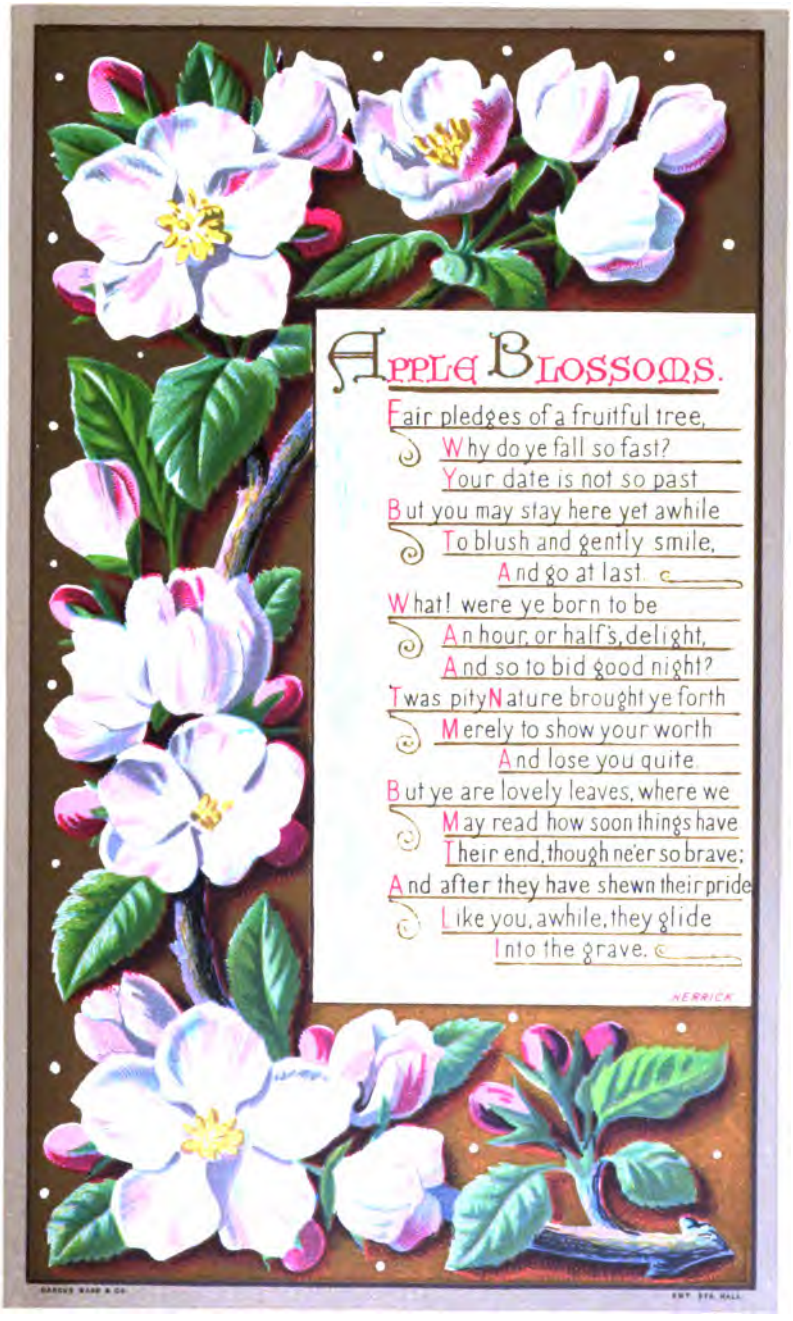
"Through me men gou into the blissful place
Of hertes hele, and dedly woundes cure;
Through me men gou into the welle of grace,
There grene and lusty May shall ever endure."

Shakspere, writing at a much later period, still bears testimony to the observance of the day, as in the "Midsummer Night's Dream"—

"If thou lovest me, then
Steal forth thy father's house to-morrow night,
And in the wood, a league without the town,
Where I did meet thee once with Helena,
To do observance to a morn of May,
There will I stay for thee;"

where it will be seen that the custom of going forth into the woods was so universal that it is mentioned as a matter of course. Bishop Mant still further, in his *British Months*, illustrates the observance—

"[illegible] the amorous nightingale


Apple Blossoms.
Fair pledges of a fruitful tree,
Why do ye fall so fast?
Your date is not so past
But you may stay here yet awhile
To blush and gently smile,
And go at last.
What! were ye born to be
An hour, or half's, delight,
And so to bid good night?
'Twas pity Nature brought ye forth
Merely to show your worth
And lose you quite.
But ye are lovely leaves, where we
May read how soon things have
Their end, though ne'er so brave;
And after they have shewn their pride
Like you, awhile, they glide
Into the grave.
HERRICK

And still more, later flowers for the bees,
Until they think warm days will never cease,
For summer has o'er-filled their clammy cells."

Keats.

The earlier days of the year, no less than the later, are essential to the well-being of the crops; the boisterous winds of March, the lowering clouds of April, have no less done their parts than the gentle sunshine of May, or the stronger rays of the July sun; and the words of the poet Warton dwell with equal truth on the tear-dashed hopes of the spring, and the smiling plenty of the closing year.

"Mindful of disaster past,
And shrinking at the northern blast,
The fleecy storm returning still,
The morning hour and evening chill,
Reluctant comes the timid spring;
Scarce a bee, with airy ring,
Murmurs the blossomed boughs around,
That clothe the garden's southern bound;
Scarce a sickly, straggling flower,
Decks the rough castle's rifted tower;
Scarce the hardy primrose peeps
From the dark dell's entangled steeps;
O'er the field of waving broom,
Slowly shoots the golden bloom;
And, but by bits, the furze-clad dale
Tinctures the transitory gale;
While from the shrubbery's naked maze,
Where the vegetable blaze
Of Flora's brightest 'broidery shone,
Every chequered charm is flown,
Save that the lilac hangs to view,
Its bursting gems in cluster blue.
Scant along the ridgy land,
The beans their new-born ranks expand;
The fresh-turned soil, with tender blades,
Thinly the spreading barley shades

Fringing the forest's devious edge,
Half-robed appears the hawthorn hedge.
Or to the distant eye displays,
Weakly green, its budding sprays.
Yet in these presages rude,
'Midst her pensive solitude,
Fancy, with prophetic glance,
Sees the teeming months advance,
The field, the forest, green and gay,
The dappled slope, the tended hay;
Sees the reddening orchard blow,
The harvest wave, the vintage flow;
Sees Time unfold his glossy robe
Of thousand hues o'er all the globe;
Sees Ceres grasp her crown of corn,
And plenty load her ample horn."

The promise of Jehovah to his people is year after year fulfilled. He, in the words of the prophet, giveth the rain, both the former and the latter in his season, and He as surely reserveth the appointed weeks of the harvest; therefore most meetly do the creatures of His hand joy before Him with a peculiar joy, the joy of harvest; for "while the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease;" and the glad anthem goes up year by year to the eternal throne throughout the centuries: "Thou crownest the year with Thy goodness; and Thy paths drop fatness. They drop upon the pastures of the wilderness, and the little hills rejoice on every side. The pastures are clothed with flocks; the valleys also are covered with corn. They shout for joy; they also sing. His work is worthy to be praised and had in honour, and His righteousness endureth for ever. The Lord is good to all, and His tender mercies are over all His works. All Thy works shall praise Thee, O God; and Thy saints shall bless Thee. They shall speak of the glory of Thy kingdom, and talk of Thy power; to make known to the sons of men Thy mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of Thy

kingdom. Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and Thy dominion endureth throughout all generations."

The requirements of our space will only allow us one more extract on this head, since we necessarily cannot pretend to treat the subject exhaustively, and we therefore prefer to make our remarks but suggestive, leaving it to our readers to add many things that we must perforce leave untouched, or but lightly handled. The general feeling of the following lines by Hardis is so redolent of the country life, and matters touched on are so true to nature, that we could easily fancy that it was with the poet, while he wrote them, as it is with ourselves in penning these remarks, that the shocks of corn and the busy reapers were actually in front of him, and that the beauty and truth of his lines spring from the direct inspiration of nature:—

"Now o'er his corn the sturdy farmer looks,
And swells with satisfaction to behold
The plenteous harvest which repays his toil.
We too are gratified, and feel a joy,
Inferior but to his, partakers all
Of the rich bounty Providence has strewed [38]
In plenteous profusion o'er the field.
Tell me, ye fair Alcanor, tell me, what
Is to the eye more cheerful, to the heart
More satisfactive, than to look abroad,
And from the window see the reaper strip,
Look round, and put his sickle to the wheat?—
Or hear the early mower whet his scythe,
And see where he has cut his sounding way,
E'en to the utmost edge of the brown field
Of oats and barley? What delights us more
Than studiously to trace the vast effects
Of unabated labour?—to observe
How soon the golden field abounds with sheaves—
How soon the oat and bearded barley fall,
In frequent lines, before the keen-edged scythe?
The clatt'ring team then comes, the swartly hind

Down leaps, and docks his frock alert, and plies
The shining fork. Down to the stubble's edge
The easy wain descends half built, then turns,
And labours up again. From pile to pile,
With rustling step, the swain proceeds, and still
Bears to the groaning load the well-poised sheaf.
The gleaner follows, and, with studious eye
And bended shoulders, traverses the field
To cull the scattered ear, the perquisite
By Heaven's decree assigned to them who need,[39]
And neither sow nor reap. Ye who have sown,
And reap so plenteously, and find the grange
Too narrow to contain the harvest given,
Be not severe, nor grudge the needy poor
So small a portion. Scatter many an ear,
Nor let it grieve you to forget a sheaf,
And overlook the loss. For He who gave
Will bounteously reward the purposed wrong
Done to yourselves; nay more, will twice repay
The generous neglect."

All Saints' Day, the first day of November, is set apart by both the Anglican and Roman branches of the Church Catholic to commemorate all those faithful ones of the past who have no other special day appointed to preserve the memorial of their trials, sorrows, and great reward. The festival was first appointed in the year 610, the year when the old pagan Pantheon at Rome was consecrated as a Christian church, and has been observed ever since. It is also called Hallowmass, from the Anglo-Saxon *Halig*, holy, being a day consecrated to religious service.

All Hallow's Eve seems to have been long regarded as a social festival, and more especially in Scotland. Thus Burns sings—

"Amang the bonny winding banks,
Where Doon runs wimpling clear,
Where Bruce ance ruled the martial ranks,
An' shook the Carrick spear,

Some merry, friendly countrie folks,
Together did convene,
To burn their nuts, e'en pon their stocks,
And haud their Hallowe'en."

The custom of burning nuts, and the reason of it, are to be met with in Gray, an English poet, and again in connection with All Hallow's Eve—

"Two hazel nuts I threw into the flame,
And to each nut I gave a sweetheart's name;
This, with the loudest bounce me sore amazed,
That, with a flame of brightest colour blazed;
As blazed the nut, so may thy passion grow,
For 'twas thy nut that did so brightly glow."

The nut, like the oak-apple, and many other common objects, became the innocent cause of superstitions that were not all so harmless as the use of it above mentioned by Gray; many signs and omens being deduced from it of a gloomier character, the presages of coming woe. "Being broken asunder, they doe foreshew the sequell of the yeare, as the expert Kentish husbandmen have observed by the living things found in them: as, if they finde an ant, they foretell plenty of graine to ensue; if a white worm like a gentill or magot, then they prognosticate murren of beasts and catell; if a spider, then we shall have a pestilence or some such-like sicknesse to follow amongst men. These things the learned also have noticed and observed, for Matthiolus, writing upon Dioscorides, saith that before they have an hole in them they containe in them either a flie, a spider, or a worme: if a flie, then warre ensueth; if a creeping worme, then scarcitie of victuals; if a running spider, then followeth great sicknesse and mortalitie." Though this all appears to us a very vain conceit and idle imagining, we should no doubt find, in our remoter country districts, a mass of superstition and old woman's fabledom at least as astounding,

though it naturally does not crop up to the surface so much as when "the learned" regarded with the same awe as the wood-cutter the gruesome sight revealed on cutting open a nut or oak-apple, and saw in the larva of the little nut-weevil the march of coming armies, the grievous hardships of approaching scarcity, or heard with awe the rustling from afar of the wings of the angel of Death speeding to smite with pestilence a rebellious land.[40] It is not a year ago that we experienced the effects of this hidden but perennial stream of folk-lore, in a district surrounded by great swelling chalk downs that appeared to cut it from the great world beyond, and yet possessing a railway station, telegraphic communication with the antipodes, and one of the great public schools of England. We were struck with the beauty of some flowering stems of houseleek on a cottage wall, and, not then knowing their occult power, were desirous of plucking one or two of them, with a view to closer examination and a possible sketch. We at once found, however, that this was an altogether inadmissible design. Two heads of the flowers had, in spite of strong remonstrance, been gathered the previous season, and before the year had run its course a brother and an uncle had died. As the evil appeared to descend upon the dwelling thus violated, we could only bow to circumstances; to have picked a head or two of blossom would have seemed a base outrage, involving ourselves or kindred in no peril, but possibly decimating the relatives of those whose only fault was that they did not stoutly enough withstand the spoliation of their "fetish." The "good old times" must, in some respects at least, have had their disadvantages, and one of these surely must have been the constant sense of dread, of vague peril, in which so many must have lived, seeing that the earth was clothed with a vegetation that, while it, on the one hand, furnished the most extraordinary remedies for the most remarkable ailments, possessed, on the other, influences of terrible power in the production of

scorpions and venomous beasts, and countless other perils both to mind and body. The ascription of the well-known rings made by fungi in the autumn to the fairies[41] is an instance of the more innocent form that these beliefs in the unseen world of nature took, but in many cases the influence is of a darker kind; of these the influence of the mandrake root is a fair example. The plant, botanically known as the *Atropa mandragora*, has a curiously forked root; it is not unlike the rough figure of a man, and its possession was held to be a kind of talisman, securing fortune to the owner, no matter how desperate the venture.

The victories of Joan of Arc over her enemies were by them ascribed to the possession of one of these roots. The plant was looked upon with great dread, for, though possibly many might have been glad to possess so potent a spell, it was not to be secured except at the cost of peculiar peril; the person gathering it was to be careful to keep to windward of the plant, to keep his face turned to the west, and to observe many other minute directions before venturing to dig it up with the naked sword, that might alone be used. If all went well, piercing shrieks were heard when it was plucked from the ground; but any slip in the *modus operandi* was fatal, as the earth opened and swallowed up the presumptous meddler with her secrets.[42] How different the feeling of the mind darkened by such superstition to that of him who, like Cowper, can pour out his heart in such a strain as the following lines embody:—

> "He looks abroad into the varied field
> Of Nature, and, though poor perhaps compared
> With those whose mansions glitter in his sight,
> Calls the delightful scenery all his own.
> His are the mountains, and the valleys his,
> And the resplendent rivers. His t' enjoy
> With a propriety that none can feel,
> But who, with filial confidence inspired,
> Can lift to heaven an unpresumptuous eye,

And smiling say, 'My Father made them all!'
Are they not his by a peculiar right,
And by an emphasis of interest his,
Whose eye they fill with tears of holy joy,
Whose heart with praise, and whose exalted mind
With worthy thoughts of that unwearied love
That planned, and built, and still upholds a world
So clothed with beauty for rebellious man?"

How far, again, removed from the mediæval terror of nature the utterances of Wordsworth—

"I have learned
To look on nature, not as in the hour
Of thoughtless youth, but hearing oftentimes
The still, sad music of humanity.
Nor harsh, nor grating, though of ample power
To chasten and subdue. And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean, and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man;
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things. Therefore am I still
A lover of the meadows, and the woods,
And mountains, and of all that we behold
From this green earth; of all the mighty world
Of eyes and ears, both what they half create
And what perceive; well pleased to recognise
In nature and the language of the sense,
The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,
The guide, the guardian of my heart and soul."

Even in the earlier days we rejoice to think that there must have been many who were able to rise above these mists, wholly or in great part, and to look across the fair scenes of earth and rejoice in the sunlight of a happier faith in all that surrounded them. Philo Judæus, in his book on agriculture, says, for instance,

"God, like a shepherd and king, leads, according to right and law, the earth and the water, and the air and the fire, and whatever plants or animals are therein, things mortal and things divine; the physical structure also of the heavens, and the circuit of the sun and moon; the revolutions and harmonious choirs of the other stars; placing over them His right word the first-born Son, who hath inherited the care of this holy flock, as the viceroy of a mighty king."

The festivities of Christmas, though as universal as the joy of harvest-home, will scarcely come so distinctly within the scope of the scheme we herein limit ourselves to, as they are held at a time of the year when but little of the floral wealth of nature is available as an adjunct. A great use is, however, made of what is accessible, and both in the literature of the season and the actual celebration—in the carols in honour of the Prince of peace, no less than in the decking of the church and the home—the holly and the ivy and many other plants meet their due regard in the minds and eyes of all to whom this high festival is dear. The Christmas carol is of hoar antiquity; indeed enthusiasts claim the angels' song—those blessed strains wafted from heaven to earth in the deep stillness of the night—as but the first of the long chain that year by year has gladdened the hearts of those who were in sympathy with such an anthem; those who, ascribing to God the highest glory, therefore enjoyed His peace, the peace that passeth understanding, and, recognising the fatherhood of God, realised the more fully the brotherhood of man. Bishop Jeremy Taylor says, "As soon as these blessed choiristers had sung their Christmas carol, and taught the church a hymn, to put into her offices for ever, in the anniversary of this festivity, the angels returned into heaven;" while Milton uses, in describing the same scene, the same word again.

> "His place of birth a solemn Angel tells
> To simple shepherds, keeping watch by night;

They gladly thither haste, and by a quire
Of squadron'd angels hear His carol sung."

The sound of these carols, "rude as may be their minstrelsy, breaks upon the mid-watches of a winter night," as Washington Irving beautifully observes, "with the effect of perfect harmony. As I have been awakened by them, in that still and solemn hour when deep sleep falleth upon man, I have listened with a hushed delight; and, connecting them with the sacred and joyous occasion, have almost fancied them into another celestial choir, announcing peace and good-will to mankind." The great event commemorated at each Christmas may very justly be deemed the commencement of a new era in the life of the world—a new starting-point in its history. At the first German synod, held in 741, it was adopted as the epoch from which Christians should date, rather than from the pagan epoch of the building of Rome; and in 1431 Pope Eugenius rendered its adoption obligatory on all Christian peoples. Even, however, as early as the fourth century, it was the custom of pious persons to date any remarkable event from the Festival of the Incarnation, a particular day in each year being then, as now, set apart for the due commemoration of the day when the infinite Deity was veiled in humanity, and the tabernacle of the living God, as in the older figure, was found amongst the dwellings of men.

The general rejoicing of the day finds utterance in many forms, in social gatherings, in deeds of charity, in public service of thanksgiving, and in the decking of our homes and churches with verdure; the latter, the use of flowers and foliage, forms a natural expression of rejoicing, not only in connection with this great festival, but as a means all the world over of expressing the general joy in any great event that touches the heart.

The flowers available are but few in number. The Christmas rose may occasionally be found in blossom thus early, and if the season

be mild; a few primroses will, in sheltered situations, be found to reward the search; these, however, cannot be depended on. Failing in finding any floral contributions, we naturally fall back upon the wealth of evergreen foliage that, despised perhaps in the general verdure of summer, is so welcome when all else is bare, and of which the laurel, ivy, yew, holly, mistletoe, laurustinus, and box furnish the most conspicuous and readily available stores.

"Lo! now is come our joyful'st feast,
Let every man be jolly;
Eache roome with yvie leaves is drest,
And every post with holly.
Now all our neighbours' chimneys smoke,
And Christmas blocks are burning;
Their ovens they with bak't meates choke,
And all their spits are turning.
Without the door let sorrow lie,
And if, for cold, it hap to die,
We'll bury it in a Christmas pye,
And evermore be merry." *Withers' Juvenilla.*

The laurel of our Christmas wreaths is not the plant so frequently mentioned by the poets: the laurus of antiquity, of the classic poets and their modern imitators, is the sweet bay, a more graceful and smaller-leaved plant; the so-called laurel of our gardens, the *Prunus lauro-cerasus*, being really no laurel at all. Its flowers, of a dark, dull purple colour, may be gathered in April and May, and these are succeeded by the soft pulpy fruit. The plant is a native of the Levant, and was introduced thence in the year 1576 into Europe, but did not reach England until 1629, when a city merchant, a Mr. Cole, reared it in his garden at Highgate, and from thence it became diffused amongst his friends and men of science.

The ivy, the *Hedera Helix* of botanical nomenclature, is another very common plant in the decorations of Yule-tide, the profusion with which it grows rendering it so readily available, that it

naturally enters largely into the garlands and wreaths that form so large a part of the adornments of both church and home, its long trailing stems fitting it in an especial manner for such a service. In the past, a very considerable opposition was raised to the introduction of the ivy into any ecclesiastical decoration, owing to its intimate association, in classic mythology, with Bacchus. This feeling, however, seems now to have largely died away, and very justly so, for it would be hard indeed, for so trivial a reason, to be debarred from the use and enjoyment of so beautiful a plant. Ivy formed the poet's crown in the classic ages, and Horace and Virgil both refer, the first in his ode to Mecænas, and the second in his Seventh Eclogue, to this use of the plant. The Romans dedicated the plant to the god of wine, and in their sculptures he is generally represented as crowned with an ivy wreath, from an old belief, mentioned by Pliny and others, that the plant thus worn neutralised the intoxicating effects of wine. The ivy grows abundantly in Greece and Asia Minor, and is especially abundant at Nyssa, the fabled dwelling-place of Bacchus in his youth. It is also indigenous to England, but does not grow in either America or Australia; and some of our readers may remember the intense delight expressed by Mrs. Stowe, in her *Sunny Memories of Foreign Lands*, at the first sight of what to us is so familiar as to be but little prized or regarded. Its common name is a corruption of its old Anglo-Saxon name *ifig*, while *Hedera* is derived, according to some writers, from the Greek word for a seat, owing to its clinging to old walls, or, according to others, from the Celtic *hedra*, a cord. Either definition is descriptive of a feature of its growth. The ivy has long been looked upon with disfavour by woodmen, from a belief that it injured the trees; and there is perhaps little room to doubt that the powerful compression to which it at times subjects them must be hurtful to their full development, as, on stripping the ivy from a tree, great and deep furrows often remain to indicate where

it held the tree in a too close embrace. It was at one time thought that the little root-like members thrown out by the stems also sucked the strength from the tree that was enveloped in them, but it appears to have been proved that the function of these is merely to serve as a support: the belief, however, is embalmed in the words of the poet, where, in speaking of the usurpation of parasites, and their influence over those whose bounty they abuse, he says—

> "The ivy which had hid my princely trunk,
> And sucked my verdure out on't."

There can be but little doubt that ivy-covered ruins are the better, rather than the worse, for its presence; for while, on the one hand, it may be said that it encourages dampness, it is no less true, on the other, that its long trailing stems, interlacing each other and matted together, serve to hold them the firmer in union, and enable them far better to resist the adverse effects of wind or weather. Of its charm æsthetically we need scarcely delay to speak, since none can fail to appreciate its mantling of verdure, though Carrington, in his poem of "Dartmoor," influenced by its association with decay and fallen greatness, seems scarcely to do it justice:—

> "Thy walls now trembling to the western gale,
> He clothes them with his spirit-chilling green;
> The dark and favourite ivy—cheerless plant,
> Sacred to desolation!"

Cowper, while admiring its beauty, was evidently not quite clear whether its influence was so good as we would fain believe. He speaks of it as "the creeping ivy," that

> "Clings to wood and stone,
> And hides the ruin that it feeds upon."

The berries of the ivy grow in large bunches, and are of a glossy

black, that contrasts admirably with the clear white berries of the mistletoe, or the rich crimson of the holly.

The yew, the third member of our Christmas garland, is botanically known as the *Taxus baccata*, the first name being from the Greek word for bow, because the wood was excellently adapted for that weapon,[43] the second from its conspicuous crimson berries. The leaves are poisonous to human beings, cattle, and horses, and the whole plant was long considered to emit a vapour so deadly as to prove fatal, like the renowned upas tree, to all who came within its influence. Gerarde, an enthusiastic botanist of the middle ages, had the courage to test this by sleeping among its branches, and we need scarcely say that he came unscathed out of the trial. The berries do not appear to possess the poisonous properties of the foliage, as they are often eaten by children with impunity. The frequent association of the yew tree with the churchyard, and the sombreness of its masses of foliage—a sombreness almost approaching to blackness, and causing it to present a marked contrast to the verdure around—have caused it to be naturally associated with ideas of death. Thus Shakspere says, "My shroud of white stuck all with yew;" and Fletcher again refers to a very similar custom—

> "Lay a garland on my hearse
> Of the dismal yew,
> Maidens, willow branches wear,
> Say I died true.
> My love was false, but I was firm,
> From my hour of birth;
> Upon my buried body lie
> Lightly, gentle earth."[44]

Blair enters fully into this gloomy view, and roundly denounces the yew tree as the

> "Cheerless, unsocial plant, that loves to dwell
> 'Midst skulls and coffins, epitaphs and worms."

Despite, however, these evils, real and imaginary, and these



dismal associations, the tree has a beauty of its own, contrasting admirably with other foliage, and having much of the dignity and antiquity of appearance that causes us to venerate trees that, like the oak or cedar, have so evidently measured their lives by centuries, and that will probably be flourishing centuries after we shall have passed away, and our name no more remembered; and we confess deriving to ourselves great interest and much food for thought in the mere contemplation of such a relic of the past, as it stands in some quiet churchyard, generation after generation of men resting beneath its shade, standing like some mighty rock in ocean, against which with ceaseless beat wave after wave strikes as it hurries by and is seen no more, an emblem of fixedness in the midst of evanescence, peace outlasting turmoil—

"A living thing
Produced too slowly ever to decay;
Of form and aspect too magnificent
To be destroyed." *Wordsworth.*

The holly is perhaps the most characteristic of all the plants associated with the season of rejoicing, its bright foliage and still more brilliant berries rendering it in an especial degree suited for its purpose in decking the walls; thus Barton, who dwells so appreciatively on all such old usages, chooses it as being especially the characteristic plant of the Christmas festivities:—

"And these are they who, on this social eve,
Its old observances with joy fulfil;
Their simple hearts the loss of such would grieve,
For childhood's early memory keeps them still,
Like lowly wild-flowers by a crystal rill,
Fresh and unfading: they may be antique,
In terms disused; but rural vale and hill,
And those who live and die there, love to seek
The blameless bliss they yield, for unto them they speak.

And therefore do they deck their walls with green;
There shines the holly bough with berries red;

There, too, the yule log's cheerful blaze is seen
Around its genial warmth and light to shed:
Round it are happy faces, smiles that spread
A feeling of enjoyment calm and pure;
A sense of happiness, home-born, home-bred,
Whose influence shall unchangeably endure,
While home for English hearts has pleasures to allure."

There is but little doubt that our Christmas decorations were suggested by heathen custom. The Romans, for example, decorated their buildings with green boughs during the Saturnalia. But this need cause even the most sensitive no conscientious pang of regret, for if there is a pagan precedent the probable origin of our later custom, there is also a Biblical precedent that may well be held to sanction it—the Feast of Tabernacles.[45] The decking of the home with holly is to be met with again in the following lines of Sir Walter Scott:—

"And well our Christian sires of old
Loved when the year its course had rolled,
And brought blithe Christmas back again
With all his hospitable train.
Domestic and religious rite
Gave honour to the holy night;
On Christmas eve the bells were rung;
On Christmas eve the mass was sung;
That only night in all the year,
Saw the stoled priest the chalice rear.
The damsel donned her kirtle sheen;
The hall was dressed with holly green;
Forth to the wood did merry men go,
To gather in the mistletoe."

It is an old belief throughout the country that the Christmas decorations should be removed by Candlemas day,[46] or the death of some one member of the family will follow during the year.

In some of the old herbals, the holly is called the holy tree, and it is not unreasonably conjectured that our more modern name is

but a corruption of the earlier name, and more especially since in Germany, Sweden, and Denmark, countries a good deal allied to us both in language and religious thought, the holly is always Christ's thorn, the *Christdorn* or *Christorn*. The plant is botanically known as the *Ilex aquifolium*. The original meaning of the generic title is uncertain; it is, however, conjectured to be either derived from the Celtic *ac*, a sharp point, or perhaps more probably from the Latin *illex*, alluring, in allusion either to the beauty of its appearance at a time of the year when its charms are particularly appreciated, or from the fact of its bark producing the bird-lime that has proved fatal to many a little bird that has come within its influence. The holly occasionally varies with yellow berries, and other varieties of the plant have the foliage blotched with streaks of yellow or white; while one kind, familiarly called hedgehog holly, has the spines not only, as in the typical plant, round the edges merely, but thickly set over the entire upper surface of the leaf. When the tree is allowed to grow naturally, the upper shoots have the foliage of simpler outline, and without the characteristic prickles; a peculiarity not, however, especially confined to the holly, but to be observed in several other plants, since such thorns or prickles develop with age, and the younger leaves and shoots have not the defensive armour that protects the lower branches from injury.

It may at first sight appear to our readers that the young and tender shoots require protection more than the older branches, but the position of the former in large measure shields them from harm, while the spines of the lower branches defend not themselves alone, but form a powerful ring of defence for the younger members. Thorns and prickles are often the result of barrenness of soil or other adverse conditions, and the degree of armature diminishes in proportion to the healthy and rampant growth of the plant, and the holly, when well established, testifies to this fact by its foliage in the same way that many of our fruit trees do, for they are spiny in

their wild condition when their whole life is a struggle for existence, but lose entirely this spinescent character when transplanted to the gardens, and when they come under more favourable conditions of growth. The verses of Southey embodying the poetic view of the subject are well known, but are so *apropos* that we make no excuse for inserting them.

"Oh, reader! hast thou ever stood to see
The holly tree?
The eye that contemplates it well perceives
Its glossy leaves,
Ordered by an intelligence so wise,
As might confound the atheist's sophistries.

"Below, a circling fence, its leaves are seen
Wrinkled and keen;
No grazing cattle through their prickly round
Can reach to wound;
But, as they grow where nothing is to fear,
Smooth and unarmed the pointless leaves appear.

"I love to view these things with curious eyes,
And moralise;
And in this wisdom of the holly tree
Can emblems see,
Wherewith perchance to make a pleasant rhyme,
One which may profit in the after-time.

"Thus, though abroad perchance I might appear
Harsh and austere;
To those, who on my leisure would intrude,
Reserved and rude;
Gentle at home amid my friends I'd be,
Like the high leaves upon the holly tree.

"And should my youth—as youth is apt, I know—
Some harshness show,
All vain asperities I day by day
Would wear away,
Till the smooth temper of my age should be
Like the high leaves upon the holly tree.

"And as when all the summer trees are seen
So bright and green,
The holly leaves a sober hue display
Less bright than they;
But when the bare and wintry woods we see,
What then so cheerful as the holly tree?

"So serious should my youth appear among
The thoughtless throng;
So would I seem among the young and gay
More grave than they;
That in my age as cheerful I might be
As the green winter of the holly tree."

The holly was, by the writers of the middle ages, dedicated in their strange, half-botanical, half-astrological treatises to Saturn; its presence was held to protect a house from lightning, and its occupants from the spells of witchcraft.

Mistletoe, the *Viscum album* of the botanist, is so well known that little description seems necessary. From its association with the rites of Druidic worship, it has always been regarded as in some sort a plant under the ban of the church; hence it is never seen in ecclesiastical decoration, though it is quite possible that this Druidic taint may be in great measure an excuse, the real reason very possibly arising from the great favour it has always enjoyed in the more secular festivities of the season, and the consequent fear that its presence might awaken thoughts that would be regarded unsuitable to time and place. Though our modern ideas as to parasites, human or otherwise, are by no means complimentary, the parasitic character of the mistletoe seems to have been the most attractive feature of the plant to the Druids, since, unlike all other vegetation, this was not born of earth, nor contracted ought of the defilements of earth; while the oak, as its resting-place, shared its sacred character. It has been objected that, in comparison with its occurrence on other trees, the oak is exceedingly

rarely found supporting the mistletoe, and to meet this objection it has been suggested that this rarity of the mistletoe on the oak, itself sacred, tended greatly to increase the superstitious reverence for it when found, and that the necessary and laborious search for it, at the time when even the greater part of the land was covered with oak, gave it the greater value when found; while others have cut the Gordian knot, declaring that the Druidic mistletoe was not the present but an allied species, that, on the downfall of their worship, was as ruthlessly extirpated as the priests themselves. Be this last theory as it may, it is certain that the plant we now call mistletoe was by the Anglo-Saxons known by a very similar name, *mistiltan*, and its parasitic nature was thereby duly noted, the word being derived from *mistl*, different, and *tan*, a twig, from the plant being so unlike any tree that it may be found upon; while the Celtic name is *gwid*, the shrub—a name that marks it out as being *par excellence* the plant worthy of regard. The plant appears to have been regarded with great reverence by all the Celtic and Scandinavian peoples. Through the middle ages it was held in great repute, and even now is held, in remote county districts, to possess a certain mystic power. It was long held to be a protection both against evil spirits and bodily disease, and our present custom of hanging the mistletoe in our dwellings has descended from those earlier days when its presence was a shield, a protection from the terrors of the unseen world. The monkish herbalists called it the *lignum sanctæ crucis*, the wood of the holy cross, so greatly did they esteem its virtues for the relief of the mind and body, taking it not only inwardly, but suspending a small piece round the neck. Shakspere, on the contrary, speaks of it as the "baleful mistletoe" in one of his plays. Paley uses the plant in his *Natural Theology* as one of his many instances of an evidence of design in nature. "What we have to remark in it is a singular instance of compensation. No art hath yet made these plants take root in the earth. Here,

therefore, might seem to be a mortal defect in their constitution. Let us examine how this defect is made up to them. The seeds are endued with an adhesive quality so tenacious, that, if they be rubbed upon the smooth bark of almost any tree, they will stick to it. And then what follows? Roots springing from these seeds insinuate their fibres into the woody substance of the tree; and the event is, that a mistletoe plant is produced next winter. Of no other plant do the roots refuse to shoot in the ground; of no other plant do the seeds possess this adhesive, generative quality, when applied to the bark of trees."

"There breathes, for those who understand,
A voice from every flower and tree;
And in the work of Nature's hand
Lies Nature's best philosophy:
For things invisible are known
By what the visible have shown.

"There is a lesson in each flower,
A story in each stream and bower:
On every herb on which we tread,
Are written words, which, rightly read,
Will lead us from earth's fragrant sod
To hope, and holiness, and God."

The mistletoe has been but little touched upon by the poets, since its associations are either heathen, and not that classic form of heathenism that has taken root in our literature,[47] or else perhaps of a too playful character for the dignity of verse. Herrick, however, like Quarles or George Herbert, always finding some valuable lesson in the most commonplace things and circumstances, compares himself, in weakness and dependence on a stronger than he, to this plant, in the following quaint and touching lines—

"Lord, I am like the mistletoe,
Which has no root, and cannot grow,
Or prosper, save by that same tree
It clings about; so I by Thee."

The box, the last of our Christmas evergreens, and botanically termed the *Buxus sempervirens*, is to be found growing in an undoubtedly wild state in some few localities, dry chalky hill-sides, in the south of England; Boxhill, near Dorking, being that best known, and deriving its name from the abundance of the plant on that spot. The wood is very close and regular in its grain, and therefore particularly valuable to the turner and wood engraver. Some box trees, cut down in 1815 on Boxhill, realised more than £10,000. By far the largest quantity of that used comes from Turkey, where the tree is far more plentiful and larger in growth than with ourselves. About a thousand tons of boxwood are imported each year from that country alone.

Its evergreen character, its close compact growth, and the readiness with which it may be clipped, have made it a great favourite in the past, and many gardens yet testify to the ease with which it can be made to assume almost any given form. In the more formal style of gardening in vogue some two hundred years ago, and known as the Dutch style, a great use was made of the box, the hedges or detached trees being cut into various fantastic shapes—a use to which it was also turned by the Romans, since we read that Pliny had in his gardens at Tusculum figures of birds and beasts carved out of the living box. Such a desecration of its natural beauty we will now hope to be a thing of the past, as it appears to us repugnant to true taste and feeling to take a tree that when growing freely has a decided charm, and to hack it by slow degrees into (at best) a very indifferent vegetable Cupid or dragon. In the middle ages it was customary at Candlemas to substitute box as a decoration for the holly and other Christmas plants that had up till that time held possession of the walls. The lines of Herrick that illustrate this old custom are worth quoting:—

"Down with the rosemary and bays,
Down with the misselto;

Instead of holly now upraise
The greener box for show.
The holly hitherto did sway;
Let box now domineer,
Until the dawning Easter-day,
Or Easter-eve appear."

Having thus dealt with the household uses of plants, and their introduction into our rural and other festivities, it only remains now for us to refer to their use in the last sad offices paid to the departed. Among the beautiful and simple-hearted customs of rural life that yet linger in out-of-the-way places, there is none perhaps more touching than that of strewing flowers before the body as it passes to its tomb, and the after-adornment of the grave of the departed friend with plants, either strewn on the turf or planted round and over the little mound that marks the last resting-place of the dearly loved and lost relative or friend. Antiquaries have asserted that these customs are the remains of rites of the early church, and that these again were in turn derived from a practice of the older religions of Greece and Rome; it is perhaps, however, sufficient to see in all these manifestations the natural and spontaneous outburst of feeling—a common feeling of humanity asserting itself, and shown in ways that bear a strong family likeness—without too closely searching into precedent.

In some rural districts the bed whereon the dead body lies before burial is strewn with flowers, a custom not unknown to Shakspere—

"White his shroud as the mountain snow,
Larded all with sweet flowers:
Which be-wept to the grave did go,
With true love showers."

This custom is again referred to by him in the following lines—

"Come away, come away, death,
And in sad cypress let me be laid;
Fly away, fly away, breath,
I am slain by a fair cruel maid.

My shroud of white, stuck all with yew,
O! prepare it;
My part of death in one so true
Did share it.

"Not a flower, not a flower sweet,
On my black coffin let there be strewn;
Not a friend, not a friend greet,
My poor corpse where my bones shall be thrown.
A thousand thousand sighs to save,
Lay me, O! where
Sad true lover ne'er find my grave,
To weep there.[48]

On the funeral of a young maiden, it was long the custom, though we are unable to say whether it is still extant, for a young girl of the age of the deceased to carry before the coffin a wreath of white flowers: an emblem at once of purity, and of that eternal crown of glory reserved for her in heaven. This wreath was, after the funeral rites were over, suspended in the church over the seat she had been accustomed to occupy: a tribute to departed worth, and an eloquent monitor to those as young and fair, that death with impartial hand levies tribute alike from every age. An old poet, Atkins, thus refers to this amongst other funeral customs—

"Mark these mounds
Upon the hills, the sheep's green pasturage;
The Roman soldiers raised them o'er their chief
And comrades, battle-slain. Far different now
The last sad tribute o'er the village dead.
In kindred arms they gently sink to rest;
By kindred hands their dying eyes are closed;
By kindred hands their bier is slowly borne;
By kindred hands the rosemary is cast
In token of remembrance in their graves!
How eloquent the language is of flowers,
Breathing sweet odours of the tender love
Of friends surviving, whilst they point alike
To this life's frailty, and the unfading bloom
Of virtue in the life that is to come!

'Tis not on Seine's gay banks alone the hand
Of friendship scatters roses on the tomb,
To veil its hideousness: on Severn's shore,
And where Neath wanders in Glamorgan's vale,
The Cambrian mourner decks the hallowed sod
With osier-bands, and fragrant herbs, and flowers,
And evergreens; and at the solemn feasts
Renews, if ought be sickly or decayed,
Her floral tributes to her garden grave.[49]
Nor let the tender feeling be unsung,
How in the south, when the pure maiden dies,
An imitative chaplet, virgin white,
Of roses is suspended o'er her pew,
Now vacant, in the lonely village church
An emblem meet of that immortal crown
Which virgin innocence shall wear in heaven."

The white rose was also planted on the maiden's grave, while the chaplet was tied with white ribbons, in testimony of her purity and innocence of life, intermingled with black, a token of the grief of those to whom she was dear. The red rose was more especially planted on the graves of lovers, a custom referred to by Evelyn, Camden, and many other old writers,[50] and the rose and lily were often blended together as a general emblem of mortality. "This sweet flower," said Evelyn, "borne on a branch set with thorns, and accompanied with the lily, are natural hieroglyphics of our fugitive, umbratile, anxious, and transitory life, which, making so fair a show for a time, is not yet without its thorns and crosses;" and Simon Wastell, writing in 1623, uses the rose again as one of the emblems of man's frailty—

"Like as the damask rose you see,
Or like the blossom on the tree,
Or like the dainty flower in May,
Or like the morning of the day,
Or like the sun, or like the shade,
Or like the gourd which Jonas had,
E'en such is man; whose thread is spun,

Drawn out, and cut, and so is done.[51]
The rose withers, the blossom blasteth;
The flower fades,[52] the morning hasteth;[53]
The sun sets,[54] the shadow flies;[55]
The gourd consumes,[56] and man he dies.

"Like to the grass that's newly sprung,
Or like a tale that's new begun,
Or like the bird that's here to-day,
Or like the pearled dew of May,
Or like an hour, or like a span,
Or like the singing of a swan,
E'en such is man, who lives by breath;
Is here, now there, is life and death.
The grass withereth,[57] the tale is ended;[58]
The bird is flown,[59] the dew's ascended;
The hour is short, the span is long;[60]
The swan's near death,[61]—man's life is done"

Many other plants are mentioned by the poets and old writers in connection with the last resting-place, in some cases an obvious appropriateness being at once visible, while in other instances, as in Herrick—

"Thus, thus, and thus we compass round
Thy harmless and unhaunted ground,
And as we sing thy dirge, we will
The daffodil,
And other flowers lay upon
The altar of our love, thy stone"—

it would appear to be only necessary that the flowers should be in themselves beautiful to render them suitable for their sad and solemn purpose.

"With fairest flowers,
While summer lasts, and I live here, Fidele,
I'll sweeten thy sad grave; thou shalt not lack
The flower that's like thy face, pale primrose; nor
The azured harebell, like thy veins; no, nor
The leaf of eglantine; whom not to slander,
Out-sweeten'd not thy breath."

Shakspere.

The violet appears to have been a marked favourite, and more especially to have been consecrated to the memory of the young; thus Shakspere says—

"Lay her i' the earth;
And from her fair and unpolluted flesh
May violets spring;"

while Shelley, writing at a later period, again refers to the use of the flower in this sad association—

"Violets for a maiden dead."

The flower and its colour[62] were in olden days accepted as symbols of truth and constancy; thus Chaucer, in his "Squiere's Tale," writes—

"And by hire beddes hed she made a mew,
And covered it with velouettes blew,
In signe of trouthe that is in woman sene."

And again, in the "Court of Love," he says—

"Lo yondir folke (quod she) that knele in blew,
They were the colour, aye, and ever shal,
The signe they were, and ever will be true,
Withouten change."

In the same manner the Earl of Surrey, in his "Complaint of a Dying Lover," associates the idea of truth with this colour—

"By him I made his tomb, in token he was true,
And, as to him belongèd well, I covered it with blue."

The rue and rosemary also entered largely into these olden funeral customs, the first being regarded as an emblem of grace, and the second a token of remembrance; thus Shakspere, in the "Winter's Tale," for example, introduces the plants—

"Reverend sirs,
For you there's rosemary and rue; these keep
Seeming and savour all the winter long:
Grace and remembrance be to you both;"

while in "Hamlet," Ophelia says—

> "There's rosemary, that's for remembrance;
> Pray, love, remember;"

and almost directly after she goes on to say—

> "There rue for you; and here's some for me;
> We may call it herbgrace o' Sundays;"

and in "All's Well that Ends Well" we find the following—

> "*Lafen*—'Twas a good lady, 'twas a good lady: we may pick a thousand sallets ere we light on such another herb.
>
> *Clown*—Indeed, sir, she was the sweet marjoram of the sallet, or rather the herb of grace."

The rue, or *Ruta graveolens* of the botanist, is not indigenous to England, its native place being Southern Europe, but from its medicinal reputation it has long been one of the plants of the herb-garden. The list of its virtues, as set forth by the old writers, is a very long one; we need but enumerate a tenth of them to give our readers an idea of its value. "The seed thereof taken in wine is an antidote against all dangerous medicines and deadly poisons. A decoction of the leaves cureth all pains and torments. It helpeth the gout or pains in the joints, hands, feet, or knees, applied thereto. Being bruized and put into the nostrils it stayeth the bleeding thereof. The juice thereof warmed in a pomegranate shell or rind, and dropped into the ears, helpeth the pains of them. The juice of it and fennel, with a little honey and gall of a cock put thereto, helpeth the dimness of the eyesight," &c.

"The antidote used by Mithridates every morning, fasting, to secure himself from any poison or infection, was this:—Take twenty leaves of rue, a little salt, two walnuts, and two figs, beaten together into a mess, with twenty juniper berries, which is the quantity appointed for each day."[68] Such a prescription had need have sovereign charm, for it must, we should imagine, be inexpres-

sibly nasty in itself, still the end appears to have justified the means, according to the old writers, and we can only wonder how it is, with such a panacea, that the illustrious Mithridates is not still flourishing amongst us in immortal youth. Should we, however, appear to scoff at a remedy and preventative so potent, we shall have to take good heed lest we number ourselves with those upon whom, even in the ages of faith, a doubting spirit fell, and were accordingly roundly castigated as follows:—"What an infamy is cast upon the ashes of Mithridates by unworthy people. They that deserve no good report themselves, love to give none to others —namely, that the renowned King of Pontus fortified his body by poison against poison. What a sot is he that knows not, if he had accustomed his body to cold poisons, hot poisons would have despatched them! The whole world is at this present time beholden to him for his studies in physic, and he that uses the quantity but of an hazel nut of that receipt every morning shall to admiration preserve his body in health, if he do but consider that rue is an herb of the Sun, and under Leo, and gather it and the rest accordingly."

It is but little wonder that a plant so efficacious should have received the name "herb-grace."

The rosemary, like the rue, is not indigenous, though, like the rue again, its reputed virtues have made it one of the most familiar plants of the rural herbal: we need not, however, quote any proofs of this, as all these old herbals are after all very much alike, and particularly in this, that nearly every plant has an almost unlimited virtue ascribed to it, and much, therefore, that we have given concerning the efficacy of the rue, might equally be given in illustration of the potency of the rosemary, or of fifty other plants. The old name, "herb-remembrance," either points to its use in the rural funeral, or was the cause of such use; whether the name sprang from the custom, or the custom was suggested by the name,

it is now impossible to say. The following passage from Gay will illustrate the use made of the plant:—

"To show their love, the neighbours far and near
Followed with wistful looks the damsel's bier;
Sprigged rosemary the lads and lasses bore,
While dismally the parson walked before.
Upon her grave the rosemary they threw,
The daisy, butter-flower, and endive blue."

One of the poems of Kirke White is dedicated to the rosemary; it possesses, as will be seen in the one verse we quote, an air of profound melancholy that we should almost term morbid, did we not remember how sorely tried the poet was by lingering disease; but a melancholy that, with this knowledge, we feel to be deeply, inexpressibly mournful and touching—

"Sweet-scented flower! who'rt wont to bloom
On January's front severe,
And o'er the wintery desert drear
To waft thy waste perfume!
Come, thou shalt form my nosegay now,
And I will bind thee round my brow,
And as I twine the mournful wreath,
I'll weave a melancholy song;
And sweet the strain shall be and long,
The melody of death." [64]

Though bright and beautiful flowers were chosen as fit tribute to the loved one, more sombre forms, as the yew and others, were at times intermingled to mark the grief of those who had to bear the loss of such an one; or they were with equal fitness placed on the graves of those whose last end, or the general tenor of their life, was melancholy.

"Here's a few flowers! but about midnight more:
The herbs that have on them cold dew o' night
Are strewings fittest for graves—
You were as flowers now withered; even so
These herblets shall, which we upon you strow."

Shakspere.

The natural effect of bereavement is to chasten and refine the feelings, and there is really far more purity of sentiment in this simple strewing of the grave of the departed with flowers than in any amount of monumental marble; the memory of the deceased is associated with these forms of natural beauty, rather than crushed beneath the superincumbent weight of votive masonry; in the one case loving hands, in the warmth of hearts purified by grief, strew the last offerings of love, while in the other, ostentatious display is at least a temptation—the work is that of the hireling, to be bought and paid for like any other marketable commodity.

While it is touching to see the memory of the dead thus revered, it is perhaps still more sad to see the resting-place of those who at their death left a gap, as it was thought, that could never again be filled, neglected and forgotten; the briars and thorns and wild disorder seem to show either that the whole family lies beneath the sod, and that their name has perished with them, or that the old family home is broken up, and its members scattered far and wide, or else that Time, the consoler, has even too effectually done his work—painful thoughts and reflections, be the true solution which of these it may.

Flowers have an eloquence of utterance that is denied to the monuments of man; the marble or granite, with its prosaic details of birth and death dates, the well-worn text, and the testimonial eulogy on the virtues of the deceased as a good father, an affectionate husband, a trustworthy friend, an exemplary son, is too ordinarily a frigid and repellent thing.

Flowers in their beauty give grace even to the home of corruption: clothed in purple and gold that outvie the glory of Solomon, they testify that they, no less than ourselves, are the creatures of God's hand, and that His tender mercies are over all His works.

"If we could open and intend our eyes,
We all, like Moses, could espy
E'en in a bush the radiant Deity."

And such a thought of the immediate presence of God, the sustainer of all the creatures of His hand, should surely be a welcome and soothing one, as we stand in the midst of the remains of those who were once very precious and well-nigh indispensable to those others who nevertheless had, at God's bidding, to surrender them, and to journey alone on that path that their absence made so much rougher than of old, and to miss at every step the shield that had ever hitherto been theirs to screen them from the perils of the way. In spite of every consolation, those grassy mounds must cast terribly long shadows across many a life.

"Lo, the lilies of the field,
How their leaves instruction yield!
Hark to Nature's lesson given
By the blessed birds of heaven!
Every bush and tufted tree
Warbles sweet philosophy—
Mortal, flee from doubt and sorrow;
God provideth for the morrow."

Heber.

Flowers in their fragility give point to the lessons of the preacher; they fitly appeal, therefore, from the graves of the dead to the hearts of those whose hour must as surely come.

"Faire daffodils, we weep to see
You haste away so soone;
As yet the early-rising sun
Has not attained his noone;
Stay, stay,
Until the hastening day
Has run
But to the even song,
And having prayed together, we
Will go with you along.

"We have short time to stay as you,
We have as short a spring,
As quick a growth to meet decay
As you, or any thing;
We die,
As your hours doe; and drie
Away,
Like to the summer's raine,
Or as the pearles of morning dew,
Ne'er to be found again.'

Herrick.

Flowers in their recurrence point to a brighter day to come; they perish in a seeming dishonour, but to rise again in a brighter glory in God's appointed time; on this ground, too, they form a fit adornment of the tomb.

The rural churchyard is the place best adapted for such an exposition of feeling; flowers in a town cemetery, though they brighten the gloom for a while, fall victims to the ungenial influences that surround them, and have a depressing instead of a cheering effect; and in towns, too, where the authorities of the burial-ground undertake to maintain the flowers on a grave for a fixed sum per annum, the poetry and spontaneous character of the offering is lost entirely.

As we write we recall two graveyards, one in the town, one in the country.

The country churchyard[65] lies in a hollow, a valley amongst great swelling downs; on one side a clear stream, fringed with iris and the blue forget-me-not flowers, on the others hedges from which rise lofty elm trees that even in the heat of summer cast a soft and grateful shade; and in the midst of such a scene as this stands the little church, centuries old, as its doorways and Norman pillars amply testify. Some of the graves are tended with a loving care, while others are slowly passing away with the lapse of years, a slight undulation alone marking their position. Such simple

monuments as exist glow with the lichen growth that year by year clothes them more and more. In such a scene of holy calm as this the congregation lingers ere the service begins, and the living and the dead alike rest as in the hollow of God's hand, and His peace—a peace which passeth all understanding—is a felt presence, making it holy ground.

The town graveyard[66] is surrounded on two sides by large factories, from whence the ceaseless roar and whirl of machinery are proceeding, and by squalid-looking houses, whose inhabitants can be none the better in body or mind for such proximity to this city of the dead. On the third side a busy street resounds with all the multifarious sounds that rise from the stream of life that rushes impetuously by; while on the remaining side are barracks, from whence one hears the hoarse word of command or the shriller tones of the bugle. As we glance around, the eye is attracted by the rolling clouds of fœtid smoke that pour from the various works that fringe the yard, or by the jets of steam that are thrown into the murky air. The tombstones are of the various grotesque shapes so prevalent a hundred years or so ago, and duly embellished with cherubs, death's heads, crossed bones, and the other properties of the craft. Many are quite illegible, the chemical fumes in the air having destroyed the lettering and rounded off all the edges of the stones, and in place of the orange lichen that in the country gives splendour even to decay, we have the grime that issues from the thousands of chimnies that surround this Golgotha. The few bushes that are scattered about have assumed weird shapes under conditions so unfavourable to their well-being, and, like everything else, are clothed in funereal black. The very paths are gravestones. Everything conspires to depress the feelings, and one hastens from the spot with relief, for everything seems out of harmony with the associations that we would desire to connect with such a spot.

Our labours under this head of our subject have come to a close, though there are, no doubt, many other customs into which flowers enter besides those herein briefly touched on: in some cases, from the restricted locality in which they are observed, they have not come under our cognisance; while in other cases, as in the flower-sermon preached each year in one of the London churches, we are unable to find any reference to them in any passage of our poets, and they are, therefore, beyond the limit we have assigned to ourselves.



CHAPTER II.

IN the present chapter we propose to consider neither the uses of flowers nor the lessons that they may be made to yield, but to stray into the meadows as children do, and to pluck their blossoms for the pleasure they afford us in collecting them—

> "When daisies pied[67] and violets blue,
> And cuckoo-buds[68] of yellow hue,
> Do paint the meadows with delight;"
>
> *(Shakspere)*

or to wander off into the copse, and

> "Seek the bank where flowering elders crowd,
> Where scattered wild the lily of the vale
> Its balmy essence breathes, where cowlips hang
> The dewy head, where purple violets lurk,
> With all the lowly children of the shade;"
>
> *(Thomson)*

afterward to dive into the dim recesses of the forest, to visit the crumbling walls of some old ruin for those characteristic flowers that, like the stone-crop and the wall-flower, flourish there, or to slowly pace the bank of some gently-flowing stream in search of those aquatic beauties that so amply repay our endeavour.

> "Flowers, as the changing seasons roll along,
> Still wait on earth, and added beauties lend;
> Around the smiling Spring a lovely throng
> With eager rivalry her steps attend;

Others with Summer's brighter glories blend:
Some grace wild Autumn's more majestic mien;
While some few lingering blooms the brow befriend
Of hoary Winter, and with grace serene
Enwreath the king of storms with mercy's tender sheen."

Barton.

Our topographical arrangement may well blend with the chronological one suggested by these lines of Barton, since the lover of nature will in his country walks find in all places and at all times of the year something of interest, and we shall endeavour, therefore, so far as possible, to preserve the sequence of the seasons in our comments. The following lines of Bishop Mant will very suitably serve as a prelude, redolent as they are with a keen sense of the beauty of the opening year:—

"'Tis pleasant now
To watch the first-fruits of the plough;
And from the seed so lately sown,
And buried in the furrows brown,
See, while we slept, the spear-like blade,
The field with tender verdure shade.
'Tis pleasant on each hardy tree,
Currant or prickly gooseberry,
Along the hawthorn's level line,
Or bush of fragrant eglantine,
Bramble, or pithy elder pale,
Or larch, or woodbine's twisted trail,
Or willow lithe, or flush of green,
To note with slight transparent screen
At intervals the branches hide
Of vegetable gauze; till wide
It spreads, and thickens to the eye
A close-wove veil of deeper dye.
'Tis pleasant to contemplate how
Grows on the yet unmantled bough
The swelling leaf profuse; if vain
Of likeness to the beauteous plane,[69]
The forward sycamore display
His foliage: or the shining spray

Of chestnut to the sun protrude
His lengthened and expanded bud
Adhesive;—to remark it first
Its brown exterior armour burst,
Of many a closely serried scale,
Close as the steel-clad warrior's mail;
And slowly through each loosened joint
Appear with green and spiral point
Emerging; then its braids unfold
Plait after plait, so nicely rolled,
That, once unwrapt, in vain would art
Fold it anew; till every part,
Stalk, fibre, frame, and framework meet
In union; and the leaf complete
Light in the passing breezes plays,
And twinkles in the sunny rays.
'Tis pleasant on the ground to pore,
And with discerning gaze explore
The leaves that mat the coppice dank.
The pathway side, or hedgerow-bank.
Chequering the now prolific mould
With fine mosaic, manifold
In figure, size, and tint, inlaid,
A carpet green by Nature made,
Ere yet of damask work she pours
From her rich loom the blooming flowers.
And now, as Nature from her loom
Pours gradual forth each opening bloom,
'Tis pleasant all the course to see
Of that delightful mystery:
To see the cloven cup display
From its spread valves in meet array
The tender blossom's apt design,
And texture delicately fine,
Of virgin whiteness, or with print
Impress of many a rainbow tint."

The same appreciation of the different charming minutiæ, which in the aggregate give so true an idea of the awakening of Nature and the revivification of the earth in the sweet spring-time

of the year, is seen in the thoughtful lines of Clare, lines that no one in busy city pent could have evolved, so clearly are they the result and outburst of a heart standing in the presence of Nature, and open to receive her teachings:—

"When apple-trees in blossom are,
And cherries of a silken white,
And kingcups deck the meadows fair,
And daffodils in brooks delight;
When golden wall-flowers bloom around,
And purple violets scent the ground,
And lilac 'gins to show her bloom,
We then may say the May is come.

"When happy shepherds tell their tale
Under the tender leafy tree;
And all adown the grassy vale
The mocking cuckoo chanteth free;
And Philomel with liquid throat,[70]
Doth pour the welcome, warbling note,
That had been all the winter dumb,
We then may say the May is come.

"When fishes leap in silver stream,
And tender corn is springing high,
And banks are warm with sunny beam,
And twittering swallows cleave the sky,
And forest bees are humming near,
And cowslips in boy's hats appear,
And maids do wear the meadow's bloom,
We then may say the May is come."

We need scarcely give other instances of the affection of our poets for the spring-time, they are so numerous that many of them must be familiar to all our readers. We pass, therefore, to a consideration of the floral wealth of Nature more in detail—a wealth, both of actual possession and the charm of reflected association, well expressed in the lines of Campbell—

"Ye field flowers! the gardens eclipse you, 'tis true:
Yet, wildlings of Nature, I dote upon you;
For ye waft me to summers of old,

When the earth teemed around me with fairy delight,
And when daisies and buttercups gladdened my sight,
Like treasures of silver and gold.

"I love you for lulling me back into dreams
Of the blue Highland mountains and echoing streams,
And of broken glades breathing their balm,
While the deer were seen glancing in sunshine remote,
And the deep mellow crush of the wood-pigeon's note,
Made music that sweetened the calm.

"Not a pastoral song has a pleasanter tune
Than ye speak to my heart, little wildlings of June;
Of old ruinous castles ye tell;
Where I thought it delightful your beauties to find,
When the magic of Nature first breathed on my mind,
And your blossoms were part of the spell.

"Even now what affections the violet awakes!
What loved little islands, twice seen in their lakes,
Can the wild water-lily restore!
What landscapes I read in the primrose's looks,
And what pictures of pebbled and minnowy brooks
In the vetches that tangled their shore."

Perhaps no plant is more characteristic of the meadow-land than the daisy, and certainly none is so endeared to us by childhood's associations. It has ever on this account been a favourite flower of the poets, and we have already given instances of its introduction by Milton, Burns, and others—

"She that is of all floures the floure,
Fulfilled of all virtue and honoure,
And ever alike faire and fresh of hewe,
As well in winter as in summer newe.
As soon as ever the sunne ginneth west
To sene this floure, how it will go to rest,
For fear of night, so hateth she darkness.
Her chere is plainly spread in the brightnesse
Of the sunne.
Well by reason men it call Maie,
The Daisie, or else the Eye of the Daie."

Chaucer's love for flowers,[71] and more especially perhaps for the present species, shows itself continually in his writings; thus in a passage preceding this he says—

"The daisie, or floure white and rede,
And in French called *la belle Marguerite.*
To hern I have so great affectioun,
As I said erst,[72] when commen is the Maie,
That in my bedde there daweth me no daie,
That I n'am up and walking in the mede
To see this floure agenst the sunne sprede.
So glad am I that when I have presence
Of it to done it all reverence."

And again and again he returns to his allegiance—

"For nothing ellis, and I shall not lie,
But for to lokin upon the daisie,
The emprise and flowre of flowres all."

Of such a love of Nature the lines of Gray are no exaggerated statement—

"The meanest floweret of the vale,
The simplest note that swells the gale,
The common sun, the air, the skies,
To him are opening Paradise."

Wordsworth, a close observer of the beauties of Nature, frequently refers to the daisy, and in one of his poems thus apostrophises it—

"Thou art indeed by many a claim
The poet's darling.

"A hundred times, by rock or bower,
Ere thus I have lain couched an hour,
Have I derived from thy sweet power
Some apprehension;
Some steady love; some brief delight;
Some memory that had taken flight;
Some chime of fancy wrong or right;
Or stray invention."

In another of his poems it is compared to

"A nun demure of lowly port."
"A little Cyclop with one eye."
"A silver shield with boss of gold."
"A queen in crown of rubies drest;"—

while it is to him no less a companion than we have already seen it to be to the older poet—

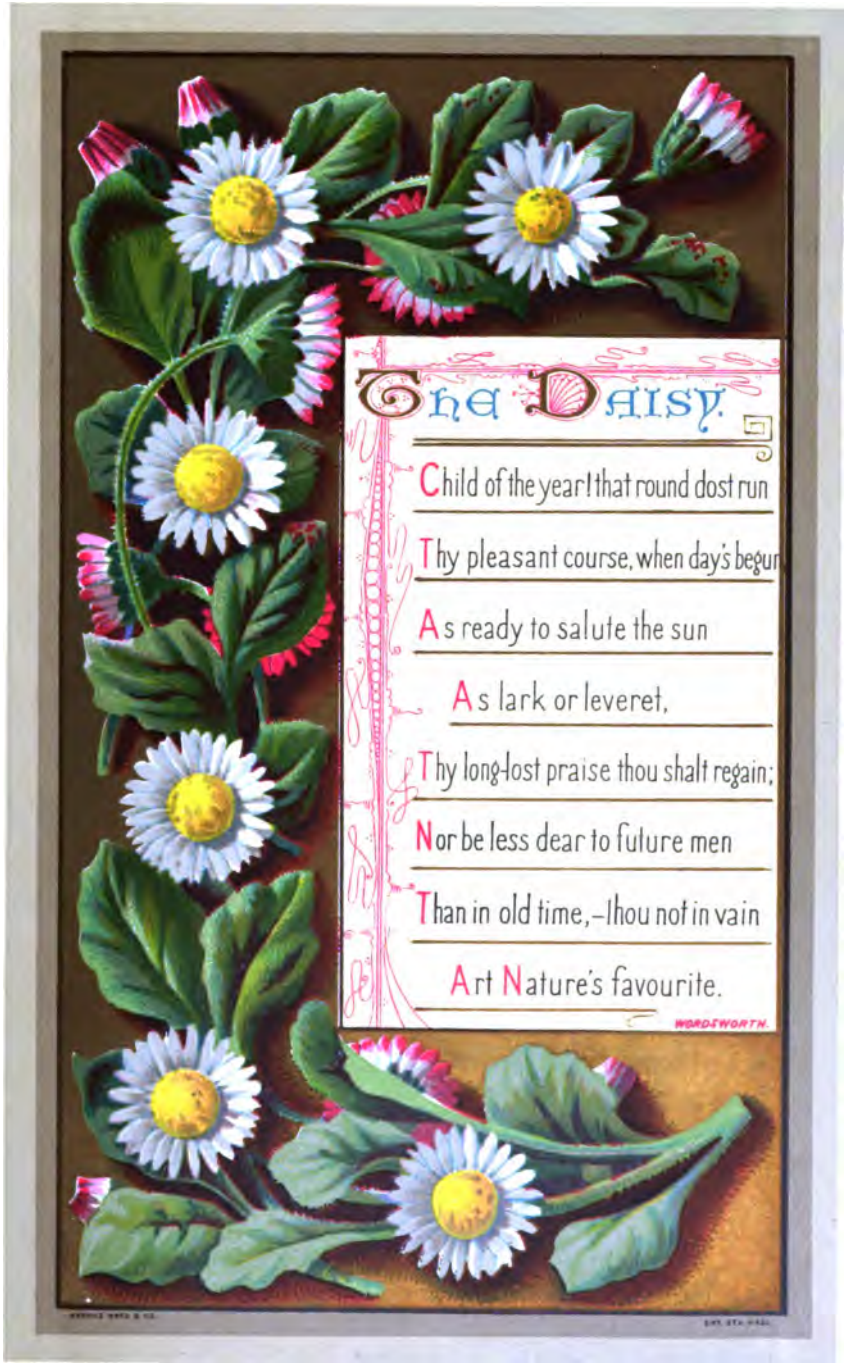
"With little here to do or see
Of things that in the great world be,[73]
Sweet daisy! oft I talk to thee,
For thou art worthy,
Thou unassuming common-place
Of Nature with that homely face,
And yet with something of a grace,
Which love makes for thee!"

a feeling repeated in another poem dedicated to it, and beginning—

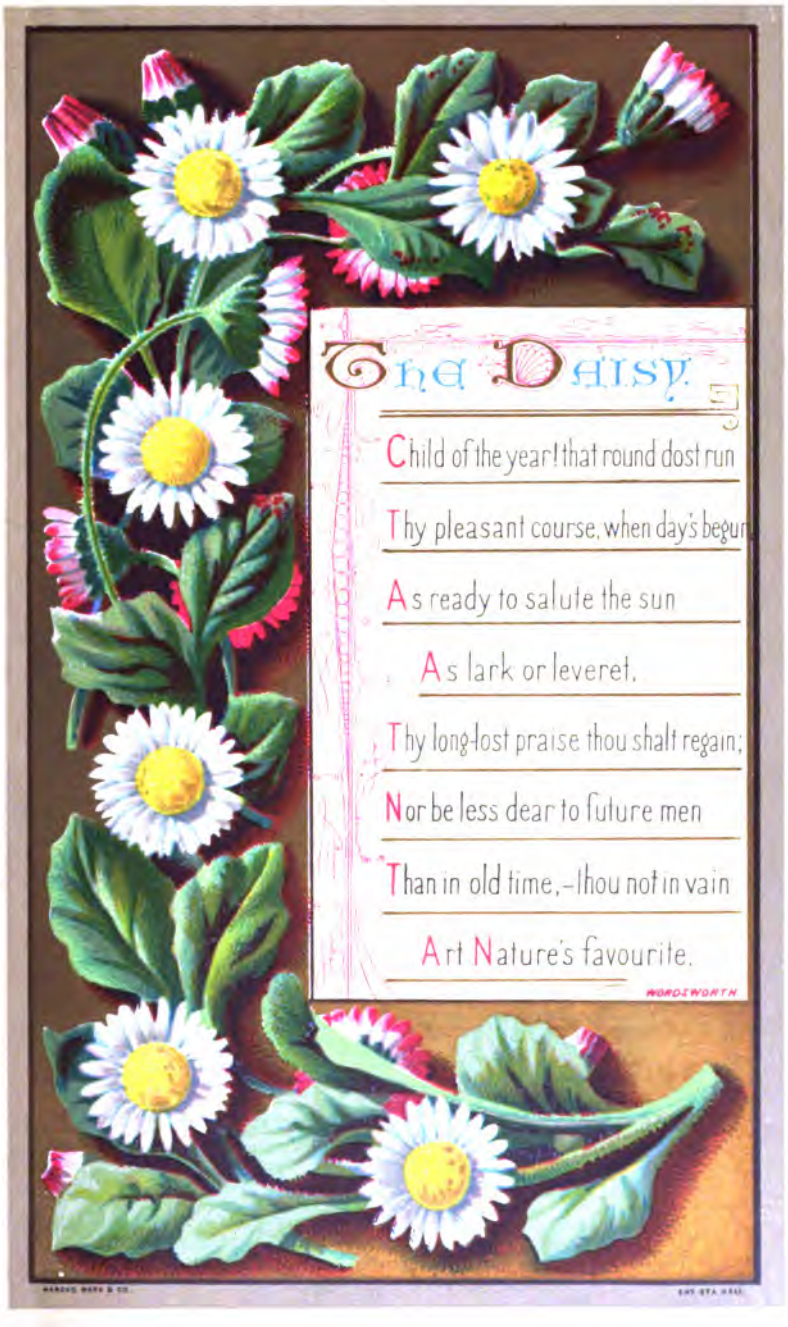
"Bright flower, whose home is everywhere!
A pilgrim bold in Nature's care,
And all the long year through, the heir
Of joy or sorrow,
Methinks that there abides in thee
Some concord with humanity,
Given to no other flower I see
The forest through?"

Not only the English name, but its scientific appellation too, bears testimony to its charm, the *Bellis perennis* of the botanist being derived from two words that signify respectively elegant and perennial, while in Scotland it is called bairnwort, the children's plant, from its being so great a favourite with the young.[74] In France it is the Marguerite, a term no less expressive of its beauty, being derived from the Latin word *Margarita*, a pearl. In Wales it is the Llygad-y-Dydd, or eye of the day, as in England.

"Trampled under foot,
The daisy lives, and strikes its little root
Into the lap of Time; centuries may come,
And pass away into the silent tomb,


The Daisy.
Child of the year! that round dost run
Thy pleasant course, when day's begun
As ready to salute the sun
As lark or leveret,
Thy long-lost praise thou shalt regain;
Nor be less dear to future men
Than in old time,—thou not in vain
Art Nature's favourite.
WORDSWORTH.

I


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WORDSWORTH

And still the child, hid in the womb of Time,
Shall smile and pluck them! When this simple rhyme
Shall be forgotten, like a churchyard stone,
Or lingering lie, unnoticed and alone;
When eighteen hundred years, our common date,
Grow many thousands in their marching state,
Ay, still the child, with pleasure in his eye,
Shall cry, 'The daisy!'—a familiar cry—
And run to pluck it in the self-same state;
And, like a child himself, when all was new,
Might smile with wonder, and take notice too!
Its little golden bosom, filled with snow,
Might win e'en Eve to stoop adown, and show
Her partner, Adam, in the silken grass,
The little gem, that smiled where pleasure was,
And, loving Eve, from Eden followed ill,
And bloomed with sorrow, and lives smiling still,
As once in Eden, under Heaven's breath,
So now on Earth, and on the lap of death,
It smiles for ever."

Clare.

Mythology informs us that the little daisy is called *Bellis*, not simply from its beauty, but in remembrance of Belides, one of the dryads of the sylvan shades. Belides, while dancing on the green sward with Ephigeus, according to the classic legend, attracted the attention and admiration of Vertumnus, who, however, on his advancing to seize her in his embrace, saw her vanish from his gaze to be transformed into the daisy, the little flower that has ever since borne her name.

Shakspere, desiring to picture the loveliness of Lucrece, chooses the daisy for one of his similes—

"Without the bed her other fair hand was,
On the green coverlet, whose perfect white
Showed like an April daisy on the grass."

The cowslip, though a very beautiful and graceful flower, has never received the amount or warmth of feeling that has been the share of the more favoured daisy; partly, probably, because it is not

nearly so universally met with, and partly because its duration of flowering is much briefer, the cowslip only lasting for some six weeks or so in spring, while the daisy may be met with almost throughout the year, and not merely, like the cowslip, in meadows alone, but adorning the road-side and clothing the waste places with its bright little flowers. It is selected by Milton as one of the typical flowers of May—

"Now the bright morning-star, day's harbinger,
Comes dancing from the east, and leads with her
The flowery May, who from her green lap throws
The yellow cowslip and the pale primrose."

Spenser, too, employs it in a very similar sense—

"Strew me the ground with daffe-down-dillies,
And cowslips, and kingcups,[75] and loved lilies."

The flower is a favourite one with Milton; he employs it as one of the flowers meet to deck the "hearse where Lycid lies;" while in another of his poems he thus speaks of it—

"By the rushy-fringed bank,
Where grow the willow and the osier dank,
My sliding chariot stays,
Thick set with agates and the azure sheen[76]
Of turkois blue, and emerald green,
That in the channel strays;
Whilst from off the waters fleet
Thus I set my printless feet
O'er the cowslip's velvet head,
That bends not as I tread."

It is a curious old belief in many parts of the country that the cowslip and the nightingale thrive together—that where there are few or no cowslips, there too the nightingale is seldom or never heard.

Thomson, amongst others, refers to this mystical union between the two, and speaks of

"The nightingale's harmonious woe,
In dewy eventides, when cowslips droop
Their sleepy heads, and languish in the breeze."

The flower is so essentially associated with the idea of youth and joy, of cowslip balls, of long rambles by the hour together in the meadows where it grows, that it is curious to find so few references to it in the writings of our poets, reflecting, as they so generally do, the popular feeling.

Flowering with the cowslip, though coming into blossom much earlier, we find in the hedgerows its near relation the primrose, the cowslip being the *Primula veris*, and the primrose the *Primula vulgaris*, of botanical science. The word *Primula* is derived from *primus*, first, and points to the early appearance of the species in the floral calendar.[77] It is perhaps the most characteristic flower of the spring, the one to which our thoughts at once naturally turn. The cowslip recalls the joys of childhood; the primrose brings to our minds again the rural walks of a later time, when the enjoyment was no less keen, though less demonstrative perhaps, and the soft tint of its blossoms wooed us to a quiet contemplation of its beauty. Though its delicate sulphur-coloured flowers are so freely met with in England and over a great part of Europe, it is unknown in many other parts of the world. Some few years ago it was reported in a Melbourne newspaper that a primrose had been imported in a Wardian case, and that it would be brought on shore and exhibited in the city. The announcement excited a great sensation; upwards of three thousand people left their callings and their homes to see the gentle stranger brought ashore; and so great was the pressure of the crowd that it was necessary to call out a strong body of police to make a line through which the primrose might be escorted to be seen by all her admirers; and doubtless many an eye grew dim and many a rough heart softened at the thought of the childhood and the dear old mother-land[78] thus brought back so keenly and touchingly by the little homely blossom of the English hedge-row; and probably a little touch of the home-sickness that it was thought the long years of separation had quite crushed out,

welled up awhile amidst the returning toil in the bosoms of some who would have been slow before to admit the possibility of such a thing.

The primrose has been very generally regarded by the poets as a pensive and melancholy flower, an emblem of early death. It is hard to say why this should be so, for it is longer-lived than many other blossoms, and even when gathered will for many days preserve all its beauty and delicate fragrance. Shakspere, in the "Winter Tale," speaks of the

> "Pale primroses,
> That die unmarried, ere they can behold
> Bright Phœbus in his strength;"

And in "Cymbeline" again he makes the "pale primrose" a funeral flower to deck the grave of Imogen. Milton carries forward the same idea; in his "Lycidas" we find the line—

> "The rathe primrose that forsaken dies;"

and in another passage he writes—

> "O fairest flower, no sooner born than blasted!
> Soft silken primrose, fading timelessly,
> Summer's chief honour, if thou hadst outlasted
> Bleak winter's force, that made thy blossom dry."

Spenser, lamenting the early loss of one to whom he was much attached, compared her to this flower—

> "Mine is the primrose in the lowly shade!
> Mine? Ah! not mine; amiss I mine did say;
> Not mine, but His which mine awhile He made;
> Mine to be His, with Him to live for aye;
> O that so fair a flower so soon should fade."

Probably this tinge of sadness, in connection with a flower that justly awakens emotions that, though tender, are not necessarily painful, arises from the old myth of the fate of Paralisos, the son of Priapus and Flora, who, dying of grief for the loss of his beloved Melicerta, was metamorphosed into the primrose.

Its associations are, however, not all of this pensive character,

since both Milton and Spenser, who have already been quoted as furnishing examples of this more melancholy view, may also supply us with others of a more cheerful nature; thus Milton in another passage writes—

"Woods and groves are of thy dressing,
Hill and dale doth boast thy blessing;"

while Spenser associates it with the bridal festivities in one of his poems—

"The virgin lily and the primrose too,
With store of vermeil roses,
To deck their bridegroom's posies
Against the bridal day."

Clare recalls, with a little natural pang, the happy days of childish wanderings in the following lines—lines full, as his always are, of an appreciation of rural life—

"I did the same in April time,
And spoilt the daisy's earliest prime;
Robbed each primrose root I met,
And ofttimes got the root to set;
And joyful home each nosegay bore,
And felt—as I shall feel no more."

Clare is a genuine poet of nature, and his outpourings are fragrant with the true feeling for country delights: the primrose—"the meek and soft-eyed primrose," as Hurdis poetically terms it—is one of his favourite flowers, and he recurs again and again with pleasure to it, though one more illustration must suffice [79]—

"O, who can speak his joys when Spring's young morn
From wood and pasture opened to his view;
When tender green buds blush upon the thorn,
And the first primrose dips its leaves in dew.

"And while he plucked the primrose in its pride,
He pondered o'er its bloom 'tween joy and pain;
And a rude sonnet in its praise he tried
Where Nature's simple way the aid of art supplied."

The following are other references to the same little flower :—

"As some wayfaring man passing through a wood
Goes jogging on, and his minde nought hath,
But how the primrose finely strow the path."

Browne.

"Lanes in which the primrose ere her time
Peeps through the moss that clothes the hawthorn root."

Cowper.

"To crop the primrose of the plains;
Does she not sweets in each fair valley find,
Lost to the sons of power, unknown to half mankind!"

Shenstone.

"Primrose, first-born child of Ver,[80]
Merry spring-time's harbinger."

Beaumont and Fletcher.

"The primrose doun the brae."

Burns.

"The primrose pale, and violet flower,
Found in each cliff a narrow bower."

Scott.

"Ask me why I send you here
This firstling of the infant year;
Ask me why I send to you
This primrose all bepearled with dew;
I straight will whisper in your ears,
The sweets of love are washed with tears:
Ask me why this flower doth show
So yellow, green, and sickly too;
Ask me why the stalk is weak,
And bending, yet it doth not break;
I must tell you, these discover
What doubts and fears are in a lover."

Carew.

The ode of Kirke White "On an Early Primrose," though rather long for insertion here, contains passages of much beauty, and will well repay perusal.

The snowdrop, anemone, lesser celandine, daffodil, and hyacinth are other beautiful spring flowers that, with the primrose, will be found adorning the copse or sheltered hedgerow, and we may profitably devote a few words to each of them.

The snowdrop is probably not really indigenous to Britain, though it has long been cultivated in gardens, and is now perfectly naturalised in many parts of England and in some few localities in Scotland and Ireland; it is, however, by no means so common as the primrose; had it been so, the title of the primrose, "the first-born flower of the opening year," would have been transferred to this little plant, whose blossoms peep above the snow weeks before the primrose shows her welcome flowers. Its botanical name is *Galanthus nivalis*, *Galanthus* being derived from two Greek words signifying milk and flower, in allusion to its colour; while *nivalis* means snowy, and, like its familiar English name, points to its appearance at a time when spring has scarcely made itself felt, and the snows of winter are yet mantling the ground. In France it is the *perce-neige*, a very expressive name.

The old poet, Langhorne, recognises its claim as the first blossom of the opening spring; he speaks of it as the

> "Earliest bud that decks the garden,
> Fairest of the fragrant race,
> First-born child of vernal Flora,
> Seeking wild thy lowly place."

Probably, too, from "the frosty prison" that he mentions, this little flower was in the mind of Drayton when he wrote—

> "All as the hungry winter-starvèd earth,
> Where she by nature labours towards her birth,
> Still as the day upon the dark world creeps,
> Ane blossom forth after another peeps,
> Till the small flower, whose root is now unbound,
> Gets from the frosty prison of the ground,
> Spreading the leaves unto the powerful noon,
> Decked in fresh colours, smiles upon the sun;"

while another less-known writer, Tighe, describes it as

> "The wintry flower,
> That whiter than the snow it blooms among,
> Droops its fair head submissive to the power

Of every angry blast that sweeps along;
Sparing the lovely trembler, while the strong
Majestic tenants of the leafless wood
It levels low."

The lightness of the solitary flower and its pendulous growth on the stem are the features that enable it thus to stand unscathed amidst the fury of the storm, conquering by yielding, while the boughs of sturdy forest trees snap in the boisterous gale.

Shelley, one of the most sensuous of our poets, and one of the most felicitous in imagery, writes of the same little flower at a later period of its history—

"The snowdrop, and then the violet,
Arose from the ground with warm rain wet,
And their breath was mixed with fresh odour sent
From the turf, like the voice and the instrument."

The anemone—*Anemone nemorosa*—is one of our most graceful wild plants, its tender green leaves and light and delicate flower rendering it a thing of beauty and a joy to contemplate as it nestles amidst the sturdier forms of the hedgebank. *Anemos* is the Greek word for wind, and the plant is called anemone, because, as the men of science say, its flowers seem so fragile to resist the keen winds of March; but, as the poets say, because the blossoms will not open until played on by the blast—

"The coy anemone, that ne'er uncloses
Her leaves until they're blown on by the wind."

On this account its name is often literally translated from the Greek, and the plant is perhaps more generally called the wind-flower than the anemone; thus Bloomfield, for example, writes—

"Now daisies blush, and wind-flowers fill with dew;"

while Bryant, in his "Autumn," a poem full of beauty, has the following lines—

"The wind-flower and the violet, they perished long ago,
And the briar rose and the orchis died amid the summer's glow."

Shelley speaks of them as "the pied wind-flowers" in his poem on the "Sensitive Plant," a term that at first seems a misnomer, as the flowers are almost always pure white when expanded; they may, however, be met with occasionally with a slight flush of colour extending over their lower surfaces, and therefore better seen in the bud before unfolded, and the lines of Hurdis—

> "Anemone, now robed in virgin white,
> Now blushing with faint crimson"—

show at least that the epithet has a justification, since they very accurately convey the idea that one derives from the contemplation of the natural flower. The word "pied" seems nevertheless to express a stronger contrast of colour than is ever seen in a flower so delicately tinted as the anemone or wind-flower.

An allied species, the *Anemone Pulsatilla*, is so called from the Latin *pulso*, I beat; if, therefore, our readers will recall the derivation already given for the generic name *Anemone*, it will be seen that the terms combined mean the wind-beaten flower, a repetition of the idea conveyed in the synonym for the anemone that we have previously been considering. It is in English called the pasque-flower, from its blossoming about Easter, the paschal feast.[81]

It is curious to notice that almost all the flowers of spring are of light and delicate hues, as though the absence of the strong sunlight of summer to some extent hindered the development of colour. The remarks of Bernardin de S. Pierre are on this subject interesting and suggestive. "Of all the colours white is the one best adapted to reflect the heat, and it is that which, speaking generally, Nature has bestowed on flowers opening in cold seasons or cold situations, such as the snowdrop, the lily of the valley, &c. We must add to the white those which have a pink or light-blue tinge, as some hyacinths, and those that are yellow—the buttercup, dandelion, and wall-flower. But flowers which open in warm spots and seasons—the corn-flower, the poppy, &c., which appear in

harvest-time—enjoy very pronounced colours, such as purple, red, and blue, which absorb the heat, radiation being reduced to a minimum. I do not know of a single purely black flower; for petals without the quality of reflection would be useless."

The little celandine, though only mentioned by one of our poets, Wordsworth, has received from him so warm a meed of praise that it would be unpardonable to omit mention of it. It is the bright little yellow star-like flower that springs up so thickly in the early spring in our hedgerows and woods,[82] and known botanically as the *Ranunculus Ficaria*, from its belonging to the same genus as the buttercups. *Ranunculus* is derived from *Rana*, a frog, many of the species of *Ranunculi* delighting to grow in moist meadows where frogs ordinarily abound. *Ficaria* is from *ficus*, a fig, and alludes to the little fig-like tubers at the root of the present plant. It is in old works often called the pilewort. Two plants of widely different appearance are popularly confounded together in name, the celandine, *Chelidonium majus*, and the plant now before us, and that, for the sake of distinction, is called the lesser celandine. The name was given to both plants from a belief that they flowered simultaneously with the arrival of the swallow, the word celandine being derived from the Greek word for that bird—

"Pansies, lilies, kingcups, daisies,
Let them live upon their praises;
Long as there's a sun that sets,
Primroses will have their glory;
Long as there are violets,
They will have a place in story:
There's a flower that shall be mine,
'Tis the little celandine."

Tourists to the Lake district, when they pay their homage at the shrine of the departed poet at Grassmere, may see upon the white marble of his tomb the carving of a little flower, the flower he loved so well, the little celandine.

Space forbids our quoting at any length from the two long poems of Wordsworth in praise of the celandine; they are, however, easily accessible to our readers.

Few of those whose love for Nature may have induced them thus far to read our remarks need be reminded of the beauty of the wild hyacinth as it stretches beneath the trees in some old wood, and carpets the ground with a sheet of purplish blue that fades into the distance into a violet haze, nor of the graceful form of the individual heads of flowers when examined in detail. Its profusion and the consequent mass of colour thus produced have not escaped the notice of our poets—

> "Now shady lanes with hyacinths are blue"—
>
> *(Bloomfield)*

nor the delicate richness of the colour when the blossoms are examined in detail; thus Dryden uses it as a foil to the brilliant yellow of another beauty of the spring, each in such a combination adding to the other a still greater charm of colour—

> "And get soft hyacinths with iron-blue,
> To shade marsh marigolds of shining hue."

The plant was fabled in classic mythology to have sprung from the blood of a beautiful youth named Hyakinthos, accidentally killed by Apollo with a quoit; hence the phrase, "hyacinthine locks," met with in some of our poems, must not be understood to mean curls resembling those of the Blue-Beard of the nursery legend, but rather like the goodly locks of the luckless Hyakinthos.

The hyacinth was by old botanists called the *Hyacinthus non-scriptus;* it is now known as the *Agraphis nutans.* We have already explained the meaning of the term *Hyacinthus,* while *nutans* simply means nodding, and refers to the growth, the long line of pendulous flowers waving on their slender stem. The other two terms, *Agraphis,* the modern generic title, and *non-scriptus,*

the older specific title, may well be considered together, as their meaning is identical, and their use springs from the same cause influencing the choice in each case. *Agraphis* is derived from two Greek words signifying "not" and "to write," while *non-scriptus* is Latin in its origin, and means "not written." These names were given because these plants were supposed by some to be the flowers referred to by Virgil in his third eclogue[88] as being inscribed with the names of kings, but which now certainly exhibit nothing resembling written characters: according to other old writers, some species of the genus are marked with the initial of the hapless Hyakinthos on their foliage. As the present and only English species bears no such markings as even the most vivid imagination could resolve into anything like caligraphic symbols, it is distinguished as the non-written hyacinth.

The odour of the flower, though very sweet, is almost too powerful to some persons to be agreeable, especially when a bunch of the flowers has been picked and brought into a room; and we have even known cases where the rich fragrance arising from a large mass blooming in the open air has proved too powerful to be pleasant, producing giddiness and a sense of nausea.

Though ordinarily of a rich blue, the blossoms are not unfrequently found of a pure white, and forming a beautiful contrast with the typical plant, either when gathered or seen flourishing in the woodland or copse; and as such plants are as healthy and vigorous as the more normal specimens, and are not the result of any deprivation of light or other enfeebling influence, they are as welcome to the eye as the purple blossoms. More rarely plants are found having all their flowers of a delicate rose-colour. Shelley notices this rich variation of colour, though it is not quite clear whether the plants he introduces are the wildlings or the garden species, since in connection with them he introduces the snowdrop, the violet, the lily of the valley, and the water-lily, all beautiful

wild plants, and places these in a garden with such distinctly garden-flowers as the narcissus, rose, and jasmine.

> "And the hyacinth purple, and white, and blue,
> Which flung from its bells a sweet peal anew
> Of music so delicate, soft, and intense,
> It was felt like an odour within the sense."

It is difficult to assign a reason for the variation of colour not unfrequently to be found in plants. Blue flowers ordinarily vary to white, more rarely to pink, never to yellow; we see this not only in the hyacinth, but in the violet, speedwell, bugle, milkwort, and many other plants. There is, however, no case of flowers, white, pink, or yellow, reversing the process and varying to blue; the nearest examples are found in plants like the borage or the forget-me-not, which have their blossoms pink before expansion, but blue when fully open. This, however, it will be seen, is merely the normal law of growth in those plants, and not an instance of variation, such as, for instance, the finding of a blue buttercup amongst the yellow ones, or of a cerulean water-lily in the midst of the silver blossoms of the typical plant. Beside the little scarlet pimpernel a bright blue-flowering pimpernel is at times found, but botanists are by no means agreed whether it is merely a variation from the type or has claims to rank as a distinct species. Red and purple flowers often vary to white, as in the case of the Herb Robert, various thistles, common heath, and fritillary; but white flowers very rarely vary to other colours beyond a very slight tinting of a second colour at times on the outer surface of their sepals or petals, as in the wood-anemone, though the common yarrow is an exception to this rule, for, normally white, it is sometimes found with heads of flowers of a deep pink, and the pink hawthorns of our gardens all owe their existence to an original accidental variation from the type. The whole subject is one little understood; the effects have at times been attributed to the

absence of light, but we find other plants under exactly similar conditions, as beneath the shade of large spreading trees, are of the typical hue that only some one plant has lost; at other times defective nutrition has been suggested, but the variation is often to the full as vigorous as the type form; while at other times the influence of soil is brought to bear as an argument, and it would be a very good one if, for instance, all buttercups growing on chalk were yellow, while all those on clay were found to be pink, but the variation is often confined to so limited an area—an area under the same geologic conditions—that this theory fails to meet the requirements of the question.

The daffodil is another of the characteristic spring flowers of the hedgerow. Shakspere speaks of the blossoms as the

> "Daffodils,
> That come before the swallow dares, and take
> The winds of March with beauty;"

a description literally correct, as its blossoms begin to expand early in March, and by their brilliant yellow and the profusion in which they are found, when met with at all, deck the yet unbudding thicket with a carpet of richest hue, a bright foretaste of the coming beauty of the opening spring. Moist meadows, copses, and osier beds seem to suit it best, and when once established it rapidly spreads, and whosoever knows one of its favourite spots can return home with baskets full of its graceful flowers.

> "I wandered lonely as a cloud
> That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
> When all at once I saw a crowd,
> A host of golden daffodils,
> Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
> Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.
>
> "Continuous as the stars that shine
> And twinkle on the milky-way,

They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay:
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance."

Wordsworth.

The daffodil was a favourite flower, too, of Herrick, though the two poets looked on it with widely different feelings: to Wordsworth the sight of such a "jocund company" filled his heart with pleasure, and the recollection was no less enjoyable—

"For oft when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude,
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils;"

while to Herrick they furnished a meet subject for one of his quaint rich homilies, and were to him a symbol of the short estate of man, and of the transience of all his glory. His lines will be found near the end of our first chapter; they commence as follows:—

"Faire daffodils, we weep to see
You haste away so soone."

The English name daffodil is a corruption of its old title, *Fleur d'asphodèle;* it is often still further corrupted into daffodilly or daffy-down-dilly. Drayton, 1563–1631, writes—

"The bank with daffodillies dight;"

and in the "Lycidas" of Milton we find the line—

"And daffodillies fill their cups with tears;"

while in Spenser we find the other form of the word—

"Strew me the ground with daffy-down-dillies."

The botanical name of the daffodil is *Narcissus pseudo-narcissus,* which may be freely translated as being the plant that is like the narcissus, but is not the narcissus itself, the more celebrated flower of the poets. The generic title alludes to the classic myth of Echo and Narkissos, and as all our readers may not be familiar with it,

we shall briefly dwell on it. Echo, a beautiful nymph of the woods and hills, was greatly beloved by Pan; unfortunately, however, the fair Narkissos, son of the river-god Kephissos, crossed her path, and she at once transferred her regard to him, a regard which he, from most exaggerated ideas of his own worth, did not return. Echo in her grief pined away until at length nought but her voice remained, as she fled to the mountains and woods, where she trusted again to meet with the once discarded Pan; while Narkissos, whose chief occupation was to wander by the brink of some clear stream that he might gaze on his charms, at last languished away, or, according to other versions, was changed by the indignant gods into a flower, the flower that yet bears his name, the *Narcissus poeticus*, or narcissus of the poets—a myth alluded to by Shelley in the following lines:—

"Then the pied wind-flowers and the tulip tall,
And narcissi, the fairest among them all,
Who gaze on their eyes in the stream's recess,
Till they die of their own dear loveliness;"

and by Thomson—

"Narcissus fair,
As o'er the fabled fountain hanging still."

The lily of the valley is not so common as many of the other beautiful flowers of the spring, or we are persuaded that it would have received greater attention than appears to have fallen to its lot, for surely to see is, in this case, at once to appreciate its delicate grace. Barton, however, speaks of it as the flower that's

"Sweetest to the view,
The lily of the vale, whose virgin flower
Trembles at every breeze beneath its leafy bower."

while Shelley calls it, with the wealth of imagery and power of description that makes his poems so rich and sensuous—

"The naiad-like lily of the vale,
Whom youth makes so fair and passion so pale,

That the light of its tremulous bells is seen
Through their pavilions of tender green."

The tender green of its foliage, when seen with transmitted light, is one of those points of keen observation, the result of a refined love of Nature, that could only be found in the work of one to whom such study was a delight; and Coleridge, another close student of Nature, records a very similar effect in his lines—

"The unripe flax,
When through its half-transparent stalk at eve
The level sunshine glimmers with green light."

The lily of the valley is sometimes called the May-lily, in the same way that we have the pasque-flower and the Lent-lily, an old name for the daffodil, names given from the season of flowering.

In one of the sonnets of Beaumont and Fletcher, beginning, "Now the lusty spring is seen," we find the line—

"Lilies, whiter than the snow."

These lilies are the May-lilies; though no more is said of them than we have quoted, they can be none other; the season of the year and the colour of the blossoms are points that indicate the lily of the valley as being alone meant. In old herbals it is the convallily and lily-constancy. Its scientific name, from which the first of these is taken, is the *convallaria*, *convallis* being the Latin for a valley, from the localities favoured by the plant, warm sheltered hedge-banks, woods, and coppices.

We turn now to the pansy and the violet. The little wild pansy, though very variable in its colouring, is so commonly to be met with on the hedge-bank and on waste ground that most of our readers will be familiar with it. Its scientific name, the *Viola tricolor*, indicates its relationship to the violets and the ordinarily three-coloured hue of its blossoms; it was on this latter account, too, that it was by the old monkish herbalists called the *Herba Trinitatis*.[84] Another old local name was the "Three faces in a

hood," from a slight resemblance that the marks on some of the petals bear to the human face; while some of the heathen writers of antiquity were so enamoured of its beauty that they consecrated it to great Jove himself. Our English name is a corruption from the French *pensée;* thus Ophelia, in Shakspere, says, "There's pansies, that's for thoughts." The meaning, however, associated with the flower is very different in the two nations; with us its dedication in old time to St. Valentine, and its other familiar name, heart's-ease, point to its use in a pleasant and welcome sense; while in France the associations it awakens are sad ones.[85] Milton, in his "Lycidas," uses it, however, in this latter sense, since on the bier of Lycidas he places, amongst other flowers,

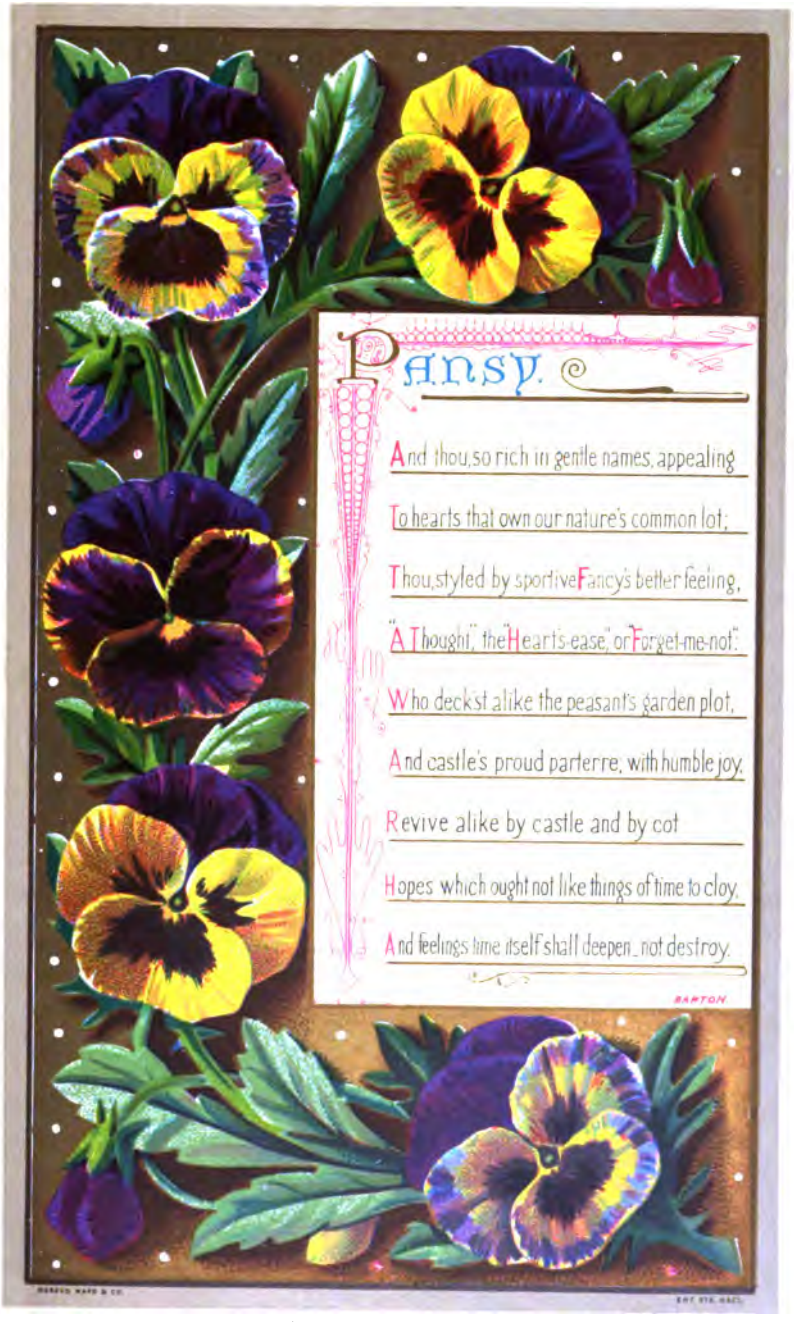
"The pansy freaked with jet;"

though in the "Comus" this idea of its being a flower of mourning is no longer thought of, and we find it in companionship and under circumstances that awaken no sense of grief, as in the line—

"Pansies, pinks, and gaudy daffodils;"

the shepherds in one of the pastoral and idyllic portions of the poem being represented as carolling in rustic lays the praises of their respective fair ones, and weaving in their honour garlands of daffodils, pinks, and pansies, the *pensées* being of course of the most agreeable nature.

Spenser introduces "the pretty paunce" in one of his stanzas; and "the prety paunce" figures again in the "Discourse of English Poetrie," written in the year 1586 by William Webbe; in another passage he has "pancyes," the exigencies of metre evidently exercising, as in all old works, a very considerable influence on the orthography of the word. In Spenser's "Shepherds' Calendar" we find the same admiration for the little flower: it is the "pretie pawnce;" while Chaucer, in the "Assemblie of Ladies," introduces it "poure penses."


Pansy.
And thou, so rich in gentle names, appealing
To hearts that own our nature's common lot;
Thou, styled by sportive Fancy's better feeling,
"A Thought," the "Heart's-ease," or "Forget-me-not:"
Who deck'st alike the peasant's garden plot,
And castle's proud parterre; with humble joy,
Revive alike by castle and by cot
Hopes which ought not like things of time to cloy,
And feelings time itself shall deepen, not destroy.
BARTON

Another old name for it, rendered familiar through the passage in the "Midsummer Night's Dream," is the "Love-in-idleness"—

> "That very time I saw (but thou could'st not),
> Flying between the cold moon and the earth,
> Cupid all armed: a certain aim he took
> At a fair vestal, throned by the west;[86]
> And loosed his love-shaft smartly from his bow,
> As it should pierce a hundred thousand hearts;
> But I might see young Cupid's fiery shaft
> Quenched in the chaste beams of the watery moon;
> And the imperial votaress passed on,
> In maiden meditation fancy-free.
> Yet marked I where the bolt of Cupid fell:
> It fell upon a little western flower—
> Before milk-white, now purple with Love's wound—
> And maidens call it love-in-idleness.
> Fetch me that flower; the herb I showed thee once;
> The juice of it on sleeping eyelids laid,
> Will make or man or woman madly dote
> Upon the next live creature that it sees."

Though we have in Britain several species of violets, the sweet-scented kind, the *Viola odorata* of scientific nomenclature, is naturally the one that has most engrossed the attention both of the poets and of all lovers of Nature. Though common in many parts it is a somewhat local plant, many districts not having it except in a state of cultivation. The purple and sweetly-scented flowers that are so familiar and welcome are produced in the spring, though other flowers, without petals and of altogether less conspicuous character, may be met with throughout the summer, and it is these latter that produce the seeds of the plant. The flowers of the violet, though ordinarily of the colour that has derived its name from the name of this little flower, are sometimes met with of a strongly reddish purple, and more frequently still of a pure white; this variation of colour does not, however, affect the delicious fragrance of the flower.

"Sweet violets, love's paradise, that spread
Your gracious odours, which you couchèd bear
Within your palie faces,
Upon the gentle wing of some calm-breathing wind,
That plays amidst the plain."

Raleigh.

The delicious odour of the violet and its modest charm are in the thoughts of Shakspere as he writes—

"Violets dim,
But sweeter than the lids of Juno's eyes
Or Cytherea's breath."[87]

Its profusion when met with, its lowly humility, and the charm that its presence adds to the rural scene, are all points on which the poets love to dwell; thus Milton speaks of "the love-lorn nightingale" that "nightly her sad song mourneth well"

"In the violet-embroidered vale;"

while in old Homer we find the same idea again—

"Everywhere appeared
Meadows of softest verdure purpled o'er
With violets: it was a scene to fill
A god from heaven with wonder and delight."

Their modest beauty is appreciatively dwelt on in the following lines of Barton:—

"Beautiful are you in your lowliness;
Bright in your hues, delicious in your scent,
Lovely your modest blossoms, downward bent,
As shrinking from our gaze, yet prompt to bless
The passer-by with fragrance, and express
How gracefully, though mutely eloquent,
Are unobtrusive worth and meek content,
Rejoicing in their own obscure recess.
Delightful flowerets! at the voice of spring
Your buds unfolded to its sunbeams bright;
And, though your blossoms soon shall fade from sight,[88]
Above your lonely birth-place birds shall sing,
And from your clustering leaves the glow-worm fling
The emerald glory of its earth-born light."

The writings of the older poets supply many other illustrations, though of these we can but furnish two, as the exigencies of space and the patience of our readers require some little consideration—

"Sheltered from the blight, ambition,
Fatal to the pride of rank,
See me in my low condition,
Laughing on the tufted bank.

"On my robes, for emulation,
No variety's imprest:
Suited to an humble station,
Mine's an unembroidered vest."

Langhorne.

"Ye violets that first appear,
By your purple mantles known,
Like the proud virgins of the year,
As if the spring were all your own."

Sir Henry Wotton.

Drayton, in his "Quest of Cynthia," a fair specimen of the grotesquely exaggerated amatory strain that runs through so much of his poetry and that of his contemporaries, appeals to the various flowers, and hopes by their means to discover her of whom he is thus in quest, and the little violet, amongst others, is interrogated—

"I asked a nodding violet, 'Why
It sadly hung the head?'
It told me, 'Cynthia late passed by,'
Too soon from it had fled."

We have already seen that the violet was one of the flowers consecrated alike in rural life and poetic imagery to the memory of the departed; hence, referring the reader to our former chapter for a greater number of illustrations, we need here but instance two that have come under our notice since these remarks were penned; one of these is the use of

"The glowing violet"

by Milton as a funeral flower in his "Lycidas;" while the other is found in Percy's old ballad of the "Friar of Orders Grey"—

"Weep no more, lady, weep no more,
Thy sorrow is in vain;
For violets plucked, the sweetest shower
Will ne'er make grow again."

Regret is but idle, as we understand the lines, when the sorrow has come home with all its power; and the purest tears of love and devotion can never again cause matters to be quite as of old before that day dawned that, to others commonplace enough, saw at night the tenor of a life diverted—a night that threw a shadow that then, at least, appeared to stretch across a life never to rejoice in sunshine more.

The charm that the presence of the violet adds to the rural scene is feelingly expressed in the lines of Howitt—

"When forth I go upon my way, a thousand joys are mine,
The clusters of dark violets, the wreaths of the wild vine;
My jewels are the primrose pale, the bindweed, and the rose;
And show me any courtly gem more beautiful than those."

Wordsworth, ever observant, ever rejoicing in the beauty of Nature as seen in all its phases, naturally supplies us with an instance of the poetic introduction once again of the violet, and, as is his wont, gives by his simile a yet added beauty—

"A violet by a mossy stone,
Half-hid from human eyes,
Clear as a star, when only one
Is shining in the skies."

The germander speedwell, another of the bright little blossoms decking the hedgerow in early summer, is not altogether without poetic association, and must not therefore be dismissed unnoticed. It has by some writers been called the forget-me-not, though that name has now by general consent been bestowed on another flower no less beautiful. Its large and bright blue flowers render it a rather striking plant for the short time that it is found in blossom.

"The spirits of my buried years arise!
Again a child, where childhood roved, I run;
While groups of speedwell, with their bright blue eyes,
Like happy children, cluster in the sun."

Elliott.

Unlike the cowslip or primrose, it never, though so fair a flower, enters into the bunches that children delight to gather, since they soon learn how fleeting is the display, the flowers being so fugacious when disturbed that, though they look tempting enough to little hands, on any attempt to gather them the flowers are at once shattered on the ground, a peculiarity not unnoticed by Mant, who thus alludes to it—

"Be cautious lest you shed
The petals of the tender flower,
And shorten thus the little hour
At most allotted it to grace
With transient bloom its native place."

There are seventeen different kinds of speedwell; the prefix "germander" serves, however, to identify the present species; its botanical name is the *Veronica Chamædrys.* It is legendarily affirmed that during the sad ascent to Calvary, a woman, one Veronica, sympathising with the sufferings of Christ, wiped His brow and face with a napkin, and that on this napkin the likeness of the face of Christ was at once miraculously impressed. The flowers of the speedwell genus were in a bygone day supposed too to carry this remembrance of our Lord stamped upon their faces, hence they in turn received the name of the saint, Veronica; another instance of the desire of the older monkish writers to impress the common objects of Nature with some religious association that would thus, as they thought, be oftener in the thoughts of the laity than would otherwise be the case.

The germander speedwell is one of the commonest and the most striking of the genus. Elliott, from whom we have already quoted, appears to have had, like Wordsworth for the celandine,

an especial and peculiar regard for it; in another passage he deliberately calls it the

"Loveliest flower of all that grow
In flower-loved England;"

and though comparisons are proverbially odious, and tastes proverbially differ, so that we should scarcely ourselves, remembering the wild rose, the water-lily, the corn-flower, and some few others, raise it to such a pinnacle, we can yet enter largely into his sense of appreciation of its beauties, without necessarily dethroning all rivals to the proud position.

In some parts of the country it is called "Bird's-eye" or "Cat's-eye," or even at times, in local parlance, confused in name with the true Eyebright or Euphrasia, a quite different plant. Wordsworth, rarely caught tripping in such matters, writes—

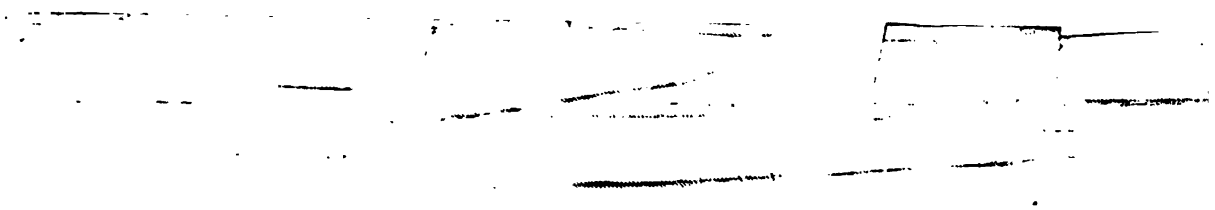
"The trembling eyebright showed her sapphire blue."

The sapphire-blue colour and the trembling motion indicate that the germander speedwell was really the plant intended by the poet. The eyebright has white flowers streaked with rose purple, and having a central yellow spot in each blossom.

The periwinkle, *Vinca major*, though not a very common plant, has not escaped the notice of two of our poets, Wordsworth and Chaucer, men whose delight in Nature wells up over and over again in their works.

"There sprang the violet all new,
And fresh pervinke rich of hew,
And flowres yellow, white, and rede,
Such plenty grew there never in mede;
Full gay was all the ground and queint,
And poudred, as men had it peint,
With many a fresh and sundry flour,
That casten up full good savour."

The rich glossy green of the foliage and the large lilac flowers of the periwinkle justly entitle it to its share of the poet's regard.



"Through primrose tufts in that sweet bower
The fair periwinkle trailed its wreaths,
And 'tis my faith that every flower
Enjoys the air it breathes."

Wordsworth.

Both the English and the botanical names are derived from the Latin verb *Vincio*, to bind, and allude to the long trailing stems of the plant that by the vigour of their growth stray over and keep down the other plants of the bank.

Few of our native plants have, with the exception perhaps of the wild rose or eglantine, had a larger measure of popular and poetic regard than the hawthorn, or May, as it is often called, from the month of its flowering; and there are perhaps few more beautiful rural sights than a collection of strangely gnarled old thorns when they are covered with a solid mass of blossom—loaded with summer's snow.

Passages in its praise are so numerous that the only difficulty consists in deciding what shall be retained and what refrained from, while the general tenor is so similar that little or no attempt at classification can be made, and we shall, therefore, simply give some few illustrative lines with but scant comment of our own.

"Marke the faire blooming of the hawthorne tree,
Who, finely cloathèd in a robe of white,
Fills full the wanton eye with May's delight."

In these lines we see again how the old poet revelled in the "month of Maie," a theme on which he seems never tired of dwelling, and to which he again and again returns.

In "L'Allegro" of Milton we find the oft-quoted lines—

"And the milkmaid singeth blythe,
And the mower whets his scythe,
And ev'ry shepherd tells his tale
Under the hawthorn in the dale."

Some critics have professed to find a difficulty in the last two lines, as to whether the "tale" was the "old, old story" that still

flourishes in all its pristine youth, or the more prosaic reckoning up of the flock; the following lines of Oliver Goldsmith in the "Deserted Village" will at all events serve to show his idea of the functions of such a tree, since to him it is—

> "The hawthorn bush, with seats beneath the shade,[8]
> For talking age and whisp'ring lovers made."

Should this not appear conclusive, we may refer to another poet, Burns, who in turn writes—

> "If Heaven a draught of heavenly pleasure spare,
> One cordial in this melancholy vale,
> 'Tis when a youthful, loving, modest pair,
> In other's arms breathe out the tender tale
> Beneath the milk-white thorn[90] that scents the evening gale."

We find the hawthorn again introduced in the verses of Bayley, commencing—

> "Oh, no! we never mention him, his name is never heard;
> My lips are now forbid to speak that once familiar word:
> From sport to sport they hurry me, to banish my regret;
> And when they win a smile from me, they think that I forget.
>
> "They bid me seek in change of scene the charms that others see;
> But were I in a foreign land, they'd find no change in me.
> 'Tis true that I behold no more the valley where we met,
> I do not see the hawthorn tree; but how can I forget?"

The hawthorn—or whitethorn, as it is sometimes called, to distinguish it from the blackthorn or sloe, another prickly hedgerow shrub bearing a profusion[91] of white blossoms earlier in the spring—is known botanically as the *Cratægus Oxyacantha*. The plant is subject to considerable variation both in the colours of the fruits and of the flowers, while minor differences exist even in the foliage. Many of these varieties are rendered permanent by careful cultivation; thus in gardens we may find hawthorns having variegated leaves, green blotched with yellow, and single or double flowers white, pink, or crimson. The berries, ordinarily crimson, and

forming in the mass a beautiful object, vary occasionally to almost white, golden, or so deep a colour as to be almost black.

Glastonbury Abbey was long famed as possessing a hawthorn that was in full leaf and flower each Christmas-day. It was legendarily explained to have arisen from the staff of Joseph of Arimathea, which he, on arriving at Glastonbury in midwinter, during his mission to England, for some reason stuck into the ground, where it at once miraculously budded. It was long considered of such especial virtue and sanctity that the sale of the blossoms became most lucrative, large numbers of the flowering twigs not only being disposed of to pilgrims who visited the spot, but even exported to different parts of Europe. The tree had two large trunks; a man in Queen Elizabeth's reign destroyed one of these, and the other at a later date, the Commonwealth, fell beneath the religious zeal of the Puritans as a relic of papal superstition.[92]

The hawthorn was at one time intimately connected with the festivities of May-day; but a double change has now come o'er the scene, the old rejoicings have in great measure passed away, while the alteration of the style has thrown May-day eleven days earlier than of old; and the hawthorn could hardly, therefore, now in any case, even if required for such a festive purpose, be depended upon for the first day of the month.[93] It is, however, a most characteristic flower of the month.

"Come, May, with all thy flowers,
Thy sweetly-scented thorn;
Thy cooling ev'ning showers,
Thy fragrant breath at morn."

Moore.

"The hawthorn whitens; and the juicy groves
Put forth their buds, unfolding by degrees,
Till the whole leafy forest stands displayed
In full luxuriance to the sighing gales."

Thomson.

The honeysuckle—"the well-attired woodbine," as Milton calls it in one of his poems—is another graceful plant of the hedgerow and copse, and as such has fallen within the poet's observation. The older name, caprifole, is used in speaking of it in the poetry of Spenser and Shakspere. Why it should have been called caprifole —*i.e.*, goatleaf—by these older writers and by the great mass of the people is not clear, though it is curious that in France too it is the *chèvre-feuille*, and in Italy *caprifoglio*. It is conjectured that the name may have arisen from the habit of the plant in trailing not only over hedges, but over rocks, places inaccessible to all but the sure-footed goats; while others have sought to prove that goats are especially fond of its foliage; and others, again, see in its wandering and capricious growth a reason for the name. The botanical name, *Lonicera Caprifolium*, of an allied species, is of no assistance to us; the specific name merely echoes the English caprifole, while the generic name was bestowed on the plant in honour of Adam Lonicer, a German botanist. The present plant, much commoner than the former, is the *Lonicera Periclymenum*. The other names are much more poetical in feeling, since honeysuckle calls up to our minds some blooming hedgerow, tapestried with this beautiful plant, the air full of its fragrance, the bees as they circle round and round diving amidst its petals for the golden store of honey at their base; while woodbine aptly recalls the long trailing lines of foliage and blossom that cluster round the tree-trunks or wander over the hedge-tops, and wave with every passing breeze.

> "With clasping tendrils it invests the branch,
> Else unadorned, with many a gay festoon
> And fragrant chaplet; recompensing well
> The strength it borrows with the grace it lends."

Shakspere does not confine himself to the word caprifole; we meet with the plant in his works under all three names, two of

them, for example, in the following very brief extract taken (like the next one) from the "Midsummer Night's Dream":—

"So doth the woodbine, the sweet honeysuckle,[94]
Gently entwist."

"I know a bank where the wild thyme blows
Where ox-lips and the nodding violet grows;
Quite over-canopied with luscious woodbine,
With sweet musk roses and with eglantine."

Milton also often introduces the plant, as, for instance, in the following lines:—

"I sat me down to watch upon a bank
With ivy canopied, and interwove
With flaunting honeysuckle."

In Bloomfield's description of the shepherd's life he introduces the woodbine as one of the features of the early summer—

"Neglected now the early daisy lies;
Nor thou, pale primrose, bloom'st the only prize;
Advancing spring profusely spreads abroad
Flowers of all hues, with sweetest fragrance stored."

Amongst these the furze, the hawthorn, and the honeysuckle, in his picture of the opening summer, stand pre-eminent.

"Where blows the woodbine, faintly streaked with red,
And rests on every bough its tender head;
Round the young ash its twining branches meet,
Or crown the hawthorn with its odours sweet."

"In the bower,
Where woodbines flaunt, and roses shed a couch."
Thomson.

"Where the bee
Strays diligent, and with th' extracted balm
Of fragrant woodbine loads his little thigh."
Thomson.

Herrick introduces it in one of his quaint and charming pastorals, where he thus apostrophises the meadows—

"Ye have been fresh and green,
Ye have been filled with flowers;

And ye the walks have been,
Where maids have spent their hours.

"Ye have beheld where they
With wicker arks did come,
To kiss and bear away
The richer cowslips home.

"You've heard them sweetly sing,
And seen them in a round,
Each virgin like a spring
With honeysuckles crowned.

"But now we see none here,
Whose silvery feet did tread,
And with dishevelled hair,
Adorned this smoother mead.

"Like unthrifts, having spent
Your stock, and needy grown,
Ye're left here to lament,
Your poor estates alone."

Barton beautifully introduces it too as a characteristic plant of the cottage garden. The whole poem is so full of fine feeling and appreciation of the country life that we scarcely care to content ourselves with merely quoting the two lines that bear immediately on our subject, and we believe that our readers will in turn rejoice that we have not been thus chary of its beauties—

"The hinds how blest, who ne'er beguiled
To quit their hamlet's hawthorn wild;
Nor haunt the crowd, nor tempt the main,
For splendid care, and guilty gain!

"When morning's twilight tinctured beam
Strikes their low thatch with slanting gleam,
They rove abroad in ether blue,
To dip the scythe in fragrant dew;
The sheaf to bind, the beech to fell,
That nodding shades a craggy dell.

"Midst gloomy glades, in warbles clear,
Wild Nature's sweetest notes they hear;
On green untrodden banks they view
The hyacinth's neglected hue;
In their lone haunts, and woodland rounds,
They spy the squirrel's airy bounds:
And startle from her ashen spray,
Across the glen, the screaming jay:
Each native charm their steps explore
Of solitude's sequestered store.

"For then the moon with cloudless ray
Mounts to illume their homeward way:
Their weary spirits to relieve,
The meadow's incense breathe at eve.
No riot mars the simple fare,
That o'er a glimmering hearth they share:
But when the curfew's measured roar
Duly, the darkening valleys o'er,
Has echoed from the distant town,
They wish no beds of cygnet-down,
No trophied canopies, to close
Their drooping eyes in quick repose.

"Their humble porch with honied flowers
The curling woodbine's shade embowers:
From the small garden's thymy mound
Their bees in busy swarms resound:
Nor fell Disease, before his time,
Hastes to consume life's golden prime:
But when their temples long have wore
The silver crown of tresses hoar;
As studious still calm peace to keep,
Beneath a flowery turf they sleep."

The wild rose, or eglantine,[95] must now receive due share of our attention. Botanically, there are numerous species of wild roses in England, but the poets have, avoiding the minutiæ necessary to scientific classification, confined themselves to two, and these are the common or dog-rose and the sweet-briar. At other times the

roses of the garden are introduced. Of the two wild roses that we have mentioned, the dog-rose is far the more commonly referred to.

The rose has at all times been regarded as a symbol of love—

> "The rose is the honor and beautie of flowers,
> The rose is the care and the love of the spring,
> The rose is the pleasure of th' heavenly powres.
> The boy of faire Venus, Cytherea's darling,
> Doth wrap his head round with garlands of rose,
> When to the daunces of the Graces he goes."

This flower was a great favourite with both the Greeks and the Romans, their admiration for it being at last carried to an absurd and irrational degree; thus Nero caused showers of roses to be sprinkled on his guests from apertures in the ceiling, an idea that Heliogabalus so developed that on one occasion several persons lost their lives, being suffocated before they could extricate themselves from the too great profusion lavished on them by their host. The Sybarites used to sleep on couches stuffed with rose petals; while even the Spartans, a people long honourably known for their abstinence from gross forms of sensual delight, were, after the battle of Cirra, so fastidious that they refused the wine served out to them because it had not been perfumed with roses. The rose too was dedicated to the god of silence, and the suspension of one over the guest-table was a hint that matters there discussed were not to be repeated, being "sub-rosa," an expression still used among ourselves with similar meaning.

The Eastern nations are no less warm in their admiration of this beautiful flower, and the writings of Sadi and Hafiz and other less well-known Persian poets abound with references to its charms, a feature in which they are naturally followed by their Western imitators. In almost all Oriental poetry the bulbul (or nightingale) and the rose are intimately connected. In one of Moore's poems we find the same union—

"Though rich the spot
With every flower this earth has got,
What is it to the nightingale
If there his darling rose is not?"

Byron, in his "Bride of Abydos," "The Giaour," and other poems of Oriental cast, introduces the same idea, as in the following passage:—

"For there—the rose o'er crag or vale,
Sultana of the nightingale,
The maid for whom his melody,
His thousand songs are heard on high,
Blooms blushing to her lover's tale;
His queen, the garden queen, his rose,
Unbent by winds, unchilled by snows,
By every breeze and season blest,
Far from the winters of the west,
Returns the sweets by nature given
In softest incense back to heaven,
And grateful, yields that smiling sky
Her fairest hue and fragrant sigh."

Our mission, however, is rather to English poets and to English flowers, and to these we turn, since the roses of Gulistan, and even the verses of Byron or Moore, when thus so thoroughly imbued with Eastern feeling, alike seem somewhat foreign to our present aim.

The common or dog-rose is that most commonly referred to. It is much more freely met with than the sweet-briar, and its larger blossoms and the greater profusion of them alike tend to bring it more directly into notice. The botanical name is *Rosa canina; rosa,* derived from the Greek *roden,* which in turn is from the Greek word *erythros,* red, being the Latin word for the plant; though, according to some etymologists, our English word, though so similar to the Latin, is Celtic in origin, being taken from the Celtic word *rhodd,* red. *Canina* is literally canine, a word, therefore, of the same force as the prefix "dog" in the common English name. In France it is the *rose de chien.* It was the

custom in the middle ages to prefix the word "dog" to many plants that were thought useless, as in the case of the dog-violet; and we may therefore fear that our wild rose, in spite of its beauty, had to bear its share of opprobrium.

The sweet-briar, or *Rosa rubiginosa*, is the plant to which the poet's name of eglantine more especially belongs, though it is at times applied indiscriminately; the following lines of Spenser, however, in which both are mentioned, are sufficiently definite and explicit:—

"Sweet is the rose, but grows upon a brere;
Sweet is the junipeer, but sharp his bough;
Sweet is the eglantine, but pricketh nere."

The beautiful growth of the rose, as it throws its long stems, covered with pink blossoms or scarlet fruit, across the hedge, has not escaped the notice of one of our greatest admirers of Nature's loveliness, as we may see in Wordsworth's description of the woodland—

"How sweet it is, when mother Fancy rocks
The wayward brain, to saunter through a wood!
An old place, full of many a lovely brood,
Tall trees, green arbours, and grand flowers in flocks;
And wild rose tiptoe upon hawthorn stocks,
Like to a bonny lass, who plays her pranks
At wakes and fairs with wandering mountebanks—
When she stands cresting the clown's head, and mocks
The crowd beneath her."

The rose is, however, as we have said, dedicated in an especial manner to the tender passion, and indeed so intimately combined with it, that, as our readers will see in one extract after another, the two seem rarely dissevered; thus Ben Jonson, in his well-known ode to Celia, beginning "Drink to me only with thine eyes," has the lines—

"I sent thee late a rosy wreath,
Not so much honouring thee,
As giving it a hope that there
It could not withered be;

But thou thereon didst only breathe,
And sent'st it back to me,
Since when it grows, and smells, I swear,
Not of itself, but thee."

Christopher Marlowe, in like manner, in the "Passionate Shepherd to his Love," makes the rose a meet present from the impassioned swain to his fair beloved—

"Come live with me, and be my love,
And we will all the pleasures prove
That valleys, groves, or hill, or field,
Or woods and steepy mountains yield.

"Where we will sit upon the rocks,
And see the shepherds feed their flocks,
By shallow rivers, to whose falls
Melodious birds sing madrigals.

"And I will make thee beds of roses,
And then a thousand fragrant posies,
A cap of flowers, and a kirtle,
Embroidered all with leaves of myrtle."

Four more verses of inducements are given, but these we need not quote; the answer written by Sir Walter Raleigh is, however, so good that we shall insert so much as deals with the matters found in the portion we have quoted from Marlowe—

"If all the world and love were young,
And truth in every shepherd's tongue,
These pretty pleasures might we move
To live with thee and be thy love;

"But time drives flocks from field to fold,
When rivers rage and rocks grow cold,
Then Philomel becometh dumb,
And age complains of cares to come.

"The flowers do fade, and wanton fields
To wayward winter reckoning yields;
A honey tongue, a heart of gall,
Is fancy's spring, but sorrow's fall.

"Thy gowns, thy shoes, thy beds of roses,
Thy cap, thy kirtle, and thy posies,
Soon break, soon wither, soon forgotten;
In folly ripe, in reason rotten."

Spenser, like many others after him, compares the beautiful glow upon the cheek to the delicate blossom of the rose, and in his description of the charms of one of his heroines says of her that "her ruddy cheeks" were "like unto roses red." Moore in like manner writes—

"Why does azure deck the sky?
'Tis to be like thine eyes of blue;
Why is red the rose's dye?
Because it is thy blush's hue.
All that's fair, by Love's decree,
Has been made resembling thee!"[96]

Carew, in his vigorous protestations of affection, in the same way associates the rose with his passion—

"No more shall meads be deck'd with flowers,
Nor sweetness dwell in rosy bowers;
Nor greenest buds on branches spring,
Nor warbling birds delight to sing;
Nor April violets paint the grove;
If I forsake my Celia's love."

These, we trust, were rather to be understood as things in which hereafter, should he prove false, he could hope to find no pleasure himself, than that we were all to be literally deprived of the joys of spring, the blossoms, and the birds, as the penalty of this poetic breach of promise, Carew *v.* Celia.

At other times this association of love with the rose takes a sadder aspect, the love being cherished in the heart as a memorial of the dead, as in the lines of Pope—

"Yet shall thy grave with rising flow'rs be dress'd,
And the green turf lie lightly on thy breast:
There shall the morn her earliest tears bestow,
There the first roses of the year shall blow."

The following lines of Scott, though the sorrow is in this case not so deep, have a kindred ring in them :—

"The rose is fairest when 'tis budding new,[97]
And hope is brightest when it dawns from fears:
The rose is sweetest washed with morning dew,
And love is loveliest when embalmed in tears."

In the next three examples the sweet-briar, or eglantine, is the rose selected by the poet, its fragrance being in each case its evident attraction—

"Art stryving to compayre
With Nature did an arber green dispred,
Framed of wanton Yvie, flowring fayre,
Through which the fragrant Eglantine did spred
Her prickling armes, embrayled with Roses red,
Which daintie odours round about them threw;
And all within with flowres was garnishèd,
That, when mild Zephyrus emongst them blew,
Did breth out bounteous smels, and painted colours shew."

Spenser.

"Make her a goodly chaplet of azured columbine,
And wreath about her coronet with sweetest eglantine."

Drayton.

"Oft let me wander o'er the dewy fields,
Where freshness breathes, and dash the trembling drops
From the bent bush, as through the verdant maze
Of sweetbrier hedges I pursue my walk."

Thomson.

In the lines of Smollett that we quote from the "Ode to Leven Water" the beauty of its flowers is the cause of its introduction—

"A charming maze thy waters make,
By bowers of birch, and groves of pine,
And hedges flowered with eglantine."

And a very similar æsthetic motive influenced Milton in the familiar passage—

"At my window bid good-morrow,
Through the sweet-briar, or the vine,
Or the twisted eglantine."

The above has often been cited as one instance of the uncertainty that is at times felt in determining what the actual plants are that are from time to time referred to by the poets, and Milton has certainly here fallen into error, as he evidently mentions the sweet-briar and the eglantine as being two distinct plants. It has been conjectured that a certain confusion of ideas may have existed between the woodbine and the eglantine, and that it was probably the honeysuckle that was, together with the sweet-briar and vine, to cluster round the poet's window. The honeysuckle well merits the epithet "twisted," as its branches twine round each other as well as round other objects, and often, when the leaves are gone, look almost like rope, so many of them being combined into a tightly twisted mass.

The garden species of roses, so beautifully varied in form and colour, are derived, not from our English wild roses, but from the larger growths of a warmer climate—the *Rosa sempervirens* of Southern Europe, the *Rosa Indica*, an Asiatic species, and many others.

It is often impossible, from the brief mention or the context, to say whether the rose of the poets is in a given instance the hedge-rose or one culled from a garden; in the following examples, however, it is probably the latter.

In Drayton's "Quest of Cynthia" we find the transforming power of love very vividly presented—

"A bed of roses saw I there,
Bewitching with their grace;
Besides, so wondrous sweet they were,
That they perfumed the place.

"I of a shrub of those inquired
From others of that kind,
Who with such virtue them inspir'd?
It answered (to my mind):

"As the bare hemlock were we such,
The poisoned'st weed that grows,
Till Cynthia, by her godlike touch,
Transformed us to the rose."

The red and white roses of the stanza we here quote from Carew had doubtless their origin in the garden—

"Read in these roses the sad story
Of my hard fate and your own glory:
In the white you may discover
The paleness of a fainting lover;
In the red the flames still feeding
On my heart, with fresh wounds bleeding.
The white will tell you how I languish,
And the red express my anguish:
The white my innocence displaying,
The red my martyrdom betraying."

Moore's "Last rose of summer left blooming alone, all her lovely companions faded and gone," was, we learn from the context, clearly a garden flower—

"I'll not leave thee, thou lone one,
To pine on the stem;
Since the lovely are sleeping,
Go sleep thou with them.
Thus kindly I scatter
Thy leaves o'er the bed,
Where thy mates of the garden
Lie scentless and dead."

Shelley, as we have seen in numerous past examples, ever rich in poetic imagery, thus introduces the "queen of flowers" in one of his poems—

"And the rose like a nymph to the bath addrest,
Which unveiled the depth of her glowing breast,[98]
Till, fold after fold, to the fainting air
The soul of her beauty and love lay bare."

The foxglove, *Digitalis purpurea*. The long stem, with its numerous hanging purple flowers, forms a conspicuous object in

the copse or hedgerow, and once seen is, from the beauty of the blossoms, remembered and appreciated. The foxglove will not grow freely in all kinds of soil. In many counties it is almost unknown, but in other districts, and more especially rocky districts like Wales, it is met with in abundance. *Digitalis* is derived from the Latin *digitus*, a finger, its long hanging blossoms being very like the fingers of a glove, hence in Wales it is *Maneg Ellyllyn*, or, fairy glove; in France the plant is called *Gants de Nôtre Dame;* in Holland, *Vingerhoed*; and in many old English herbals, witches' fingers, fairy thimble, or Puck's glove, and in fact its more familiar name, foxglove,[99] is a further illustration of the same idea, though it should be written folk's glove, the allusion being to the "little good folks," as the fairies were often called. Browne, in one of his verses, embodies the general idea, though his application is somewhat different, as he represents Pan, the god of the woods, seeking this plant for some fair dryad—

> "To keep her slender fingers from the sunne,
> Pan through the pastures often times hath runne
> To pluck the speckled foxgloves from their stem,
> And on those fingers neatly placèd them."

Cowley, in like manner, goes back to classic mythology in the lines—

> "The foxglove on fair Flora's hand is worn,
> Lest while she gathers flowers she meet a thorn."

In Pollinius' "Flora Veronensis" the foxglove is called the *Cornocopio;* and in Jussieu's "Genera plantarum," *Fingerhut.* Some etymologists have endeavoured to explain the word into Fuchsglove, in honour of Fuchs, who published a botanical work in 1542, but it is not at all probable that such an explanation is the correct one, seeing that Turner, writing in 1566, and Gerarde in 1597, both have the word foxglove. Bosworth, in his Anglo-Saxon dictionary, gives the word as *Foxes-glova;* while Dr. Prior, in his work on the names of plants, suggests *Foxes-glew* as the original.

The Anglo-Saxon word *gliew* refers to an ancient musical instrument, a series of bells hung on a support. In Norway the plant is the *Revbielde*, or foxbell.

According to some legends the fairies lend the blossoms of this flower to the fox when on his marauding expeditions, that, on the same principle that burglars wear list slippers, his velvet tread may be still further softened. In the purely Celtic regions of Ireland the fox is held in the same reverence as the fairies themselves, and, like them, is never spoken of directly, but as "the gentleman," from a belief that if called by his own name he would kill every duck and chicken of those hardy enough thus to call on him. Like the fairies, he is supposed, even if invisible, to be always lurking about within earshot. Wool is laid on the bushes for him, while some even go so far as to make him little mittens, from a belief that thus propitiated, and his feet comfortably incased in these during his cold and wet nocturnal wanderings, he will, as a point of honour, do no injury to his benefactors. If, therefore, we have not reached the fact that foxes wear gloves, we have at least got as far as the belief that they do, at all events in County Mayo.

The foxglove is occasionally found with white bells.

Bees seem to especially delight in the foxglove. It is curious to watch the business-like way in which they rifle each flower in succession—not wandering from one blossom to another in an erratic, purposeless way, but taking each one in its due course, for

> "Bees that soar for bloom
> High as the highest peak of Furness Fells,
> Will murmur by the hour in foxglove bells. *Wordsworth.*

The same poet again refers to the value to the insect world of these graceful flowers in the following lines—

> "The foxglove now in crimson tresses rich
> Depends, whose freckled bells to insect tribes
> Afford a canopy of velvet bliss;"

while to Coleridge it is one of the typical plants of summer, and its decay a proof that the floral year has passed its meridian, and has already begun to decline—

> "The tedded hay, the first fruits of the soil,
> The tedded hay and corn-sheaves in one field,
> Show summer gone, ere come. The foxglove tall
> Sheds its loose purple bells, or in the gust,
> Or when it bends beneath the up-springing lark,
> Or mountain-finch alighting. And the rose
> (In vain the darling of successful love)
> Stands like some boasted beauty of past years,
> The thorns remaining, and the flowers all gone." [100]

The same rural lanes that have been the chosen home of the rose and honeysuckle will in due course produce the still more common and equally attractive blackberry. Botanists, according to the importance, greater or less, that they have attached to various details, have made out a considerable number of specific forms, though with some these forms are considered as of only doubtful permanency—mere variations from the normal type, so that in some works we are told that there are seven species, while in one ("Babington's Manual") thirty-six species are admitted. The poets naturally do not go in for this nice discrimination of forms, nor is it desirable that they should; an opinion that our readers will at once echo if they compare the lines of Elliott, full as they are of grace and feeling, with those that follow, wherein we have tried to combine the poetic element with the stricter analysis of the professed botanist, who too often thinks more of the structure and dissection of organs than of the living beauty, that charm which is least expressible in language, Anglo-Saxon or Latinised, and which has made them "a joy for ever."

> "Though woodbines flaunt and roses grow
> O'er all the fragrant bowers,
> Thou need'st not be ashamed to show
> Thy satin-threaded flowers;

"For dull the eye, the heart as dull,
That cannot feel how fair,
Amid all beauty, beautiful,
Thy tender blossoms are."

"And to himself he drew a bramble spray,
And in its study passed some hours away;
Its setose stem and ternate leaves, the leaflets cuspidate,
The prickles small, and foliage so evenly serrate—
All seemed to point it out to be the *Rubus glandulosus*,
And not, as he at first had thought, the *Rubus fruticosus*."

The word *rubus* is derived from the Celtic verb *reub*, to tear, and not inaptly describes one very conspicuous feature in the plant, the long arms studded with prickles, as all who may have gone "blackberrying"—and who has not?—can from doleful experience testify. Beattie, in recounting the poetic legends of his childhood, dwells on the dolorous tale of "The orphans in the wood," and we see in it the luckless plight of these unfortunates, and how even the bramble, though it contributed to their needs, did so but inefficiently, and took heavy toll from their wardrobes for the little that it did—

"Behold, with berries smeared, with brambles torn,
The babes, now famished, lay them down to die,
'Midst the wild howl of darksome woods forlorn,
Folded in one another's arms they lie;
Nor friend, nor stranger, hears their dying cry."

The joys of blackberrying, however, far outweigh its sorrows, and furnish some of the happiest hours of childhood, and therefore of our life; and though other seasons and the lapse of years bring other joys, they are not the joys of childhood; of how many are we tempted to think them but hollow and unreal; and, on the other hand, how many children are there who by their manner prove their belief that an afternoon after the blackberries is at best but a hollow joy? When we see the little parties rambling amidst the long red stems, and overshadowed by the clusters of pink flowers

and profusion of deep purple fruit, and watch them for awhile as they gather the luscious fruit into their cans and baskets, we have not long to wait before deciding as to whether they are enjoying themselves or not.

"Thy fruit full well the schoolboy knows,
Wild bramble of the brake!
So put thou forth thy small white rose;[101]
I love it for his sake.

. . . .

"The primrose to the grave is gone;
The hawthorn flower is dead;
The violet by the mossed gray stone
Hath laid her weary head;

"But thou, wild bramble, back dost bring,
In all their beauteous power,
The fresh, green days of life's fair spring,
And boyhood's blossomy hour.

"Scorned bramble of the brake! once more
Thou bidd'st me be a boy,
To gad with thee the woodlands o'er
In freedom and in joy."

Elliott.

Brambles are not now looked upon by the farmer with much favour, as they make a hedge look ragged and straggling, and overpower the hawthorn and other hedgerow shrubs. Our forefathers, however, not only tolerated them, but actually planted them, to render the hedge a better fence than without this mass of prickly growth it was held to be; and as the blackberry, once in, is very difficult to eradicate, there is no doubt that many of the bushes, though appearing to flourish in perennial youth, are really of a greater age than we can at all realise when we see the fugitive character of so much of the wild growth that springs up everywhere. The use of the bramble as a hedge-plant is advocated by Tusser, and expressed in his quaintly-worded way—

"Go plough up, or delve up, advised with skill,
The breadth of a ridge, and in length as ye will;

When speedy quickset, for a fence ye will draw,
To sow in the seed of the bramble and haw."

In moist hedgerows the guelder rose is often a conspicuous feature, either in the early summer, when the tree is covered with a mass of white blossom, or in the autumn, when these clusters of flowers are replaced by bunches of crimson berries, and the whole plant (both stems and foliage) glows with the same brilliant hue, a brilliancy of colouring that makes it very conspicuous amongst the surrounding foliage. The guelder rose, or snowball tree of our gardens, is merely a variety of this. It is the plant alluded to by Cowper in the following lines—

"Throwing up into the darkest gloom
Of neighbouring cypress, or more sable yew,
Her silver globes, light as the foamy surf
That the wind severs from the broken wave."

According to some writers, the name was originally rose-elder, the elder-like tree that bears flowers like roses; and the transposition into elder-rose, followed by a slight corruption, results in the present name, guelder rose. This explanation is a very unsatisfactory one. The tree is not much like the elder; in fact, the chief point in which they agree is similarity of situation; and the heads of the flowers are not, even on the most cursory glance, a bit like roses. According to other writers, it derives its name from a place called Gueldres, in Holland. This version is still less satisfactory, since it is inexplicable why the name of a small Dutch town should thus be attached to one of our indigenous trees. The botanical name of the shrub is the *Viburnum opulus.*

The trees that line the hedgerow or form the forest shades must not be altogether omitted, though we can give them but scant attention, as they are to some extent outside the limit—the floral boundary that we have assigned ourselves. As, however, from their grandeur they have not escaped the poets' notice, neither must we be altogether unmindful of their claim to our regard.

"Hail! old patrician trees, so great and good,
Hail! ye plebeian underwood,
Where the poetic birds rejoice,
And for their quiet nests and plenteous food
Pay with their grateful voice.

"Here Nature does a house for me erect—
Nature, the wisest architect,
Who those fond artists doth despise
That can the fair and living tree neglect,
Yet the dead timber prize.

"Here let me, careless and unthoughtful lying,
Hear the soft sounds above me flying,
With all the wanton boughs dispute;
And the more tuneful birds to both replying,
Nor be myself too mute."

Cowley.

We have already had occasion to refer to the oak, but we can scarcely in this place pass it by unmentioned. The botanical name of the tree is the *Quercus Robur*, a name open to more than one interpretation. The Latin word for the oak is *quercus*, and that appears to us reason sufficient to account for its present scientific name. It has, however, been suggested that the name was derived from the two Celtic words, *quer*, beautiful, and *cuez*, a tree, a term possibly applied to those few oaks that were the resting-places of the venerated mistletoe; but as the proper Celtic name for an oak was *derw*, much of the force of the reasoning appears to be lost. The tree in the Gaelic language was called *darach*, and in Greek, *drus;* and from the same or cognate roots are derived the words druid and dryad.

The oak has ever held the pre-eminent place; no other tree—at least amongst the nations of Europe—has been so universally esteemed, no other tree has been so valued and so valuable. At a time when the food supply of the country was much more limited, oak-corn (*acc-corn, i.e.*, acorns), some few hundreds of years ago, formed the staple diet of man and beast. In Roman law it was

expressly provided that the owner of an oak-tree might gather up the acorns, even if they were blown on to another man's ground.

> "Heroes on earth once lived, men good and great,
> Acorns their food: thus fed they flourished,[102]
> And equalled in their age the long-lived oak.
> Happy that race of men, most sacred tree,
> Thy shade their living house, that house itself
> Shed daily food to feed its peaceful lord."
>
> *Cowley.*

Even when the progress of agriculture rendered men less dependent on such food, oak mast was still highly valued for the fattening of the herds of swine that in former times were so large a part of the property of the wealthy, and even so late as the time of William the Conqueror the mast was the most valued part of the tree, the value of the woods in the Domesday Book being estimated by the number of hogs they would fatten; and the survey must have been taken with great care and minuteness, for in some places woods are put down as being "of one hog."

The acorn occupied a high position in the regard of the Romans, for while their term *glans* had a somewhat extended meaning—being applied to the fruit of several trees—the acorn was the one to which the term was most pointedly applied, the fruit of the other trees being expressed by a second term: thus the beech mast was *glans fagi*, the walnut *Jovis glans*, and so on; and from this we derive our more modern word gleaner, the gatherer of scattered fruit, though the term is now confined to those who follow the reaper in the harvest-field. The Saxon word corn, from *cern*, a kernel, was, like the Latin *glans*, a generic name, and included many fruits that, like the *acc-corn*, are now excluded, owing to the more circumscribed use of the word.

At a later date the tree became more valuable for its timber than its fruit, and for hundreds of years formed the "wooden walls" of England, the theme of many a patriotic song;[103] and the

legal enactments that had before been enforced for the protection of the tree from the value of its fruit were replaced by others no less stringent to ensure a constant and adequate supply of sound timber for the national dockyards.

"The oak
Once formed man's house and oracle, its fruit
His food. Now the patriot monarch leaves
A throne of centuries; leaves the forest
Hills, o'er mountain waves to rule triumphant,
Great father of ships."

Legends.

Now that the honour of England has passed into the hands of the ironmonger, the oak must be regarded with a regretful interest, as an old friend that has done noble service in its day, and that somehow, through no fault of its own, has been supplanted; and for the spirit-stirring ballads of the past, such as—

"Hearts of oak are our ships,
Jolly tars are our men,"

the change must be a particularly bad one; much of the sentiment, at least, appears to be lost if we read

"Iron chests are our ships,"

in place of the original rendering. The mutations wrought by time in the history of the oak may be further seen in the lines of Rogers, dedicated to an old tree—

"Round thee, alas, no shadows move!
From thee no sacred murmurs breathe;
Yet within thee, thyself a grove,
Once did the eagle scream above,
And the wolf howl beneath.

"Wont in the might of woods to dwell,
The holy Druid saw thee rise,
And planting there the guardian spell,
Sung forth, the dreadful pomp to swell,
Of human sacrifice!

"Then culture came, and days serene,
And village sports, and gardens gay:
Full many a pathway crossed the green;
And maids and shepherd youths were seen
To celebrate the May.

"Father of many a forest deep,
Whence many a navy thunder-fraught
Erst in thy acorn cells asleep,
Soon destined o'er the world to sweep,
Opening new spheres of thought."

Our poetry abounds in allusions to this tree. The finest poem dedicated to it exclusively is perhaps that of Cowper to the Yardley oak; it is, however, far too long to quote, and far too good to mutilate by any excision, so, having referred here to it, we commend its perusal to our readers, and conclude with the lines of Strutt—

"Than a tree, a grander child earth bears not:
What are the boasted palaces of men,
Imperial city, or triumphal arch,
To forests of immeasurable extent,
Which time confirms, which centuries waste not?
Oaks gather strength for ages; and when at last
They wane, so beauteous in decrepitude,
So grand in weakness! e'en in their decay[104]
So venerable! 'twere sacrilege t' escape
The consecrating touch of time. Time watched
The blossom on the parent bough; time saw
The acorn loosen from the spray; time passed
While, springing from its swaddling shell, yon oak,
The cloud-crowned monarch of our woods, by thorns
Environed, 'scaped the raven's bill, the tooth
Of goat and deer,[105] the schoolboy's knife, and sprang
A royal hero from his nurse's arms.[106]
Time gave it seasons, and time gave it years,
Ages bestow'd, and centuries grudged not;
Time knew the sapling when gay summer's breath
Shook to the roots the infant oak, which after
Tempests moved not. Time hollowed in its trunk
A tomb for centuries, and buried there

The epochs of the rise and fall of states,[107]
The fading generations of the world,
The memory of man."

The beech tree, *Fagus sylvatica*, when fully grown, has a sylvan beauty of its own that makes it scarcely less a monarch of the woods than the oak itself, and there are few more perfect pictures in nature than a beech wood, where beneath the "beechen shades" the mossy turf tempts us to linger,[108] while the warm sunshine is tempered into a refreshing coolness, and the glare of its fiercest rays mellowed into a soft and subdued light as it travels through the mass of foliage.

"There, at the foot of yonder nodding beech
That wreathes its old fantastic roots so high,
His listless length at noontide he would stretch,
And pore upon the brook that bubbles by."

Gray.

The word *fagus* is derived from a Greek word signifying to eat, and alludes, therefore, to the great value—a value almost as great as that we have seen attaching to the oak—that this tree possessed in the earlier days of our island history, as supplying welcome and abundant food to the herds of swine that fattened on the bounteous store of mast the tree affords.

There is great beauty in the trunk of a fine old beech tree, covered, as it often is, with various lichens, and carved into the most quaint and fantastic shapes, while large patches of dark green moss clothe the base of the tree, and make it one of the favourite studies of the artist. The poet has not been slow to perceive that the smooth surface of the bark has proved a temptation not to be resisted by the wandering swain, who, nothing loath, employs its surface either to perpetuate his own name or that of some dear object of his thoughts.

"Not a beech but bears some cypher,
Tender word, or amorous text."

Luis de Gongora.

"On a smooth beachen rind the pensive dame
Carves in a thousand forms her Tancred's name."

Tasso.

Shakspere does not tell us in "As you like it" whether the trees were beech or not, but it is not unreasonable to conclude that they were, for the speech of Jaques, "I pray you, mar no more trees with writing love-songs in their barks,"[109] seems to imply that the amount done was somewhat extensive, and we may assume that a man of such experience would not be ignorant of the special merits of the beech rind for such a purpose, and the smoothness of the beech trunk as compared with most other trees fits it in particular for such lengthy inscriptions as the Shaksperean text implies.

In Drayton's "Quest of Cynthia," another tree is selected for a like purpose—

"Long wand'ring in the wood, said I,
'Oh, whither's Cynthia gone?"
When soon the echo doth reply
To my last word, 'Go on.'

"At length, upon a lofty fir,
It was my chance to find
Where that dear name most due to her
Was carved upon the rind.

"Which, whilst with wonder I beheld,
The bees their honey brought,
And up the carvèd letters filled,
As they with gold were wrought."

Practically, the letters, as many of our readers may know by youthful experience, would be much more likely to be filled up with the resinous matter that so freely exudes when any kind of fir tree is thus tampered with.

We may fitly conclude with the poetic lines of Campbell—

"Thrice twenty summers have I stood
In bloomless, fruitless solitude;

Since childhood in my rustling bower
First spent its sweet and sportive hour;
Since youthful lovers in my shade
Their vows of truth and rapture paid,
And on my trunk's surviving frame
Carved many a long-forgotten name.
Oh! by the vows of gentle sound
First breathed upon this sacred ground;
By all that love hath whispered here,
Or beauty heard with ravished ear;
As love's own altar honour me!
Spare, woodman, spare the beechen tree!"

The elegant birch, so appropriately called by Coleridge "the lady of the woods," has, as we might expect, attracted the attention of our poets, some—as Shenstone or Phillips—dwelling on its efficacy as an aid to education, others—as Herrick—referring to its use in more joyous country customs, while others again dwell on its beauty, the grace of its pendulous boughs, the lightness of its foliage, or the gleaming silver of its trunk. Botanically it is the *Betula alba, betula* being derived from the Celtic word *betu*, the old name for the tree in that language. In Gaelic it is *beath*, and in Anglo-Saxon, *birce.*

This, the most graceful of all our forest trees, occurs abundantly in a truly wild state in the northern parts of Britain, though probably in the other portions of our island it is only naturalised, since it is naturally a tree loving the colder parts of the earth, Northern Europe, Siberia, and Canada, and if found in more southern regions it will only ordinarily be seen in the mountain districts. It thrives in the most barren and rocky soils.

Our ancestors, with perhaps a keener love of nature than at present exists, decked their houses with evergreens all through the winter and spring months, replacing them as they got withered with other plants; thus the Christmas holly and mistletoe were succeeded by the box, and the box by the yew.

'When yew is out, then birch comes in,
And many flowers beside,
Both of a fresh and fragrant kin,
To honour Whitsuntide.

"Green rushes then, and sweetest bents,
With cooler oaken boughs,
Come in for comely ornaments,
To readorn the house."

Herrick.

Wordsworth, in his description of an evening walk at Winandermere, introduces the birch as one of the characteristic and charming accessories of the scene—

"How pleasant, as the yellowing sun declines,
And with long rays and shades the landscape shines,
To mark the birches' stems all golden light,
That lit the dark slant woods with silvery white!"

And the same feature of the tree strikes the eye of Keats, who writes of

"The silvery stems
Of delicate birch trees."

Economically, the tree is of great value in the sterile lands where it best flourishes, and where other bounties of nature appear to be but sparingly dispensed. Its bark forms the canoe of the Red Indian, or the shingles of the settler's hut; it is also of great value in tanning, and it supplies the Laplander with cordage. The sap forms a pleasant and medicinal drink, while its leaves supply a substitute for tea. Indeed, so multifarious are the uses to which it is turned, that a bare enumeration would necessitate far more space than we are able to afford.

The various species of fir are from time to time alluded to. A fir wood has a peculiar character of its own; the trees shoot up high in the air, and with few lateral branches; the dark green masses of foliage at their summits throw a shade over the whole, while the ground is carpeted with one even pale brown sheet of

the dead leaves that have fallen from above. The general hush soothes the spirit and lulls the mind into quiet thought, and the air is fragrant with the aromatic odour given off from the trees, the incense of this natural cathedral. The stillness is so profound that the sharp click of the squirrel's feet is heard as he scampers off some trees away from the intruder; while the wind, not felt below, makes a low and solemn murmur amongst the tree-tops, and the sharp crackling of a dry stick beneath the feet startles, and seems a desecration, so alien is it to the genius of the spot. It is at sunset, however, that such a place should, if possible, be seen, when, turning away from the departing light, the long aisles are lost in the dimness of twilight, though the nearer trunks glow and turn crimson as the setting sun strikes fully on them; while on turning towards the sun all the forms are defined in sharp detail, the long upright lines of the trunks and the smallest ramifications of the branches showing blackly against the scarlet and gold of the western sky. We can recall so many enjoyable hours spent in such spots, that to us, at least, a fir wood is a sunny memory evermore, and the lines of Mason seem like flat treason—

> "The Scottish fir, in murky file,
> Rears his inglorious head, and blots the fair horizon."

Wordsworth, ever in harmony with the inner life of nature, and ever impressionable to its influence, has, as his lines testify, a keener sense, and he more especially notices the subdued murmur of the wind in the only lines that we must permit ourselves to quote—

> "O'er my head,
> At every impulse of the moving breeze,
> The fir grove murmurs with a sea-like sound:
> Alone I tread this path."

Longfellow, in like manner, speaks of "the murmuring pines" in his "Evangeline."

Large areas of mountain-side in Scotland, Sweden, Switzerland,

and other countries are clothed with various species of coniferous trees, many of them in situations quite inaccessible to man.

> "Aloft, the ash and warrior oak
> Cast anchor in the rifted rock;
> And higher yet the pine tree hung
> His shattered trunk, and frequent flung,
> Where seemed the cliffs to meet on high,
> His boughs athwart the narrow sky."
>
> *Scott.*

Thomson, on the other hand, dwells on its refreshing shade—

> "Welcome, ye shades! ye bowery thickets, hail!
> Ye lofty pines! ye venerable oaks!"

Leaving now the forest glades, we turn our steps to some grey mouldering ruin mantled with ivy, and its walls fringed with plants of many kinds and all colours, such as the viper's bugloss, with its long stems of deep purplish blue blossoms; the little stonecrop, sometimes, from the richness and profusion of its flowers, called the golden moss; and last mentioned, but not least welcome, the flower that is amongst all these pre-eminently called the wallflower, from its beauty, its size, and the fragrance of its blossoms. Herrick, in his quaint way, tells us that a luckless maiden was once, as her friends thought, safely stowed away in captivity, and beyond the influence of her lover so dear, but that the power of her affection found a way of eluding such basely mechanical restraints on her passionate regard. The sad end of the fair one must, however, be told in Herrick's own words—

> "Up she got upon a wall,
> 'Tempting down to slide withal;
> But the silken twist untied,
> So she fell, and bruised, and died.
> Love, in pity of the dead,
> And her loving, luckless speed,
> Turned her to this flower we call
> Now the flower of the wall."

Burns, in one of his poems, introduces it as a characteristic flower amidst ruin and decay—

"As I stood by yon roofless tower,
Where wallflower scents the dewy air,
And owlet roams in ivy bower,
Telling the midnight moon her care."

The wallflower is often by other poets called the gilliflower, a name that is still at times used. The two following examples from Spenser will serve to illustrate this:—

"Bring hither the pink and purple columbine,[110]
With gylliflowers."

"Coming to kiss her lips (such grace I found),
Meseemed I smelt a garden of sweet flowers,
That dainty odours from them threw around,
For damsels fit to deck their lovers' bowers.
Her lips did smell like unto gilliflowers."

The botanical name of the plant is the *Cheiranthus cheiri*, from two Greek words signifying hand and flower, because from its fragrance it is a temptation to pick it; hence, though one of our wild plants, it is often, like the lily of the valley or the honeysuckle, transferred to the cottage garden, where a variety of it, having larger and more highly coloured petals, is commonly cultivated. It flowers in the early part of the summer, commencing in May.

"In yon mingled wilderness of flowers,
Fair-handed Spring unbosoms every grace;
Throws out the snowdrop and the crocus first;
The daisy, primrose, violet darkly blue,
And polyanthus of unnumbered dies;
The yellow wallflower, stained with iron-brown;
And lavish stock, that scents the garden round;
From the soft wing of vernal breezes shed,
Anemones; auriculas, enriched
With shining meal o'er all their velvet leaves;
And full ranunculus of glowing red."

Thomson.

"The wallflower, the wallflower,
How beautiful it blooms!
It gleams above the tower,
Like sunlight over tombs;
It sheds a halo of repose
Around the wrecks of Time:
To beauty give the flaunting rose,
The wallflower is sublime.

"Flower of the solitary place!
Grey Ruin's golden crown!
That lendest melancholy grace
To haunts of old renown:
Thou mantlest o'er the battlement,
By strife or storm decayed;
And fillest up each envious rent,
Time's canker-tooth hath made.

"Whither hath fled the choral band
That filled the abbey's nave?
Yon dark, sepulchral yew trees stand
O'er many a level grave;
In the belfry's crevices the dove
Her young brood nurseth well,
Whilst thou, lone flower, dost shed above
A sweet, decaying smell.

"In the season of the tulip-cup,
When blossoms clothe the trees,
How sweet to throw the lattice up,
And scent thee on the breeze!
The butterfly is then abroad,
The bee is on the wing,
And on the hawthorn by the road
The linnets sit and sing.

"Sweet wallflower, sweet wallflower!
Thou conjurest up to me
Full many a soft and sunny hour
Of boyhood's thoughtless glee;
When joy from out the daisies grew,
In woodland pastures green,
And summer skies were far more blue
Than since they e'er have been.

"Rich is the pink, the lily gay;
The rose is summer's guest;
Bland are the charms when these decay—
Of flowers first, last, and best!
There may be gaudier on the bower,
And statelier on the tree,
But wallflower, loved wallflower!
Thou art the flower for me."

Moir.

Some few of the more characteristic plants of the stream, such as the forget-me-not, the water-lily, the flowering rush, and royal fern, must now engage our thoughts. Few who have ever wandered through the fringing meadows on some sunny summer day, by the side of any of our meandering rivers, need be reminded at any great length of the beauties there presented to the eye: the extreme quiet and repose of the pastoral landscape, only broken by the sudden splash of some fish; the momentary sight of the kingfisher as he speeds gleaming by, or the ceaseless hawking to and fro of the various brightly-coloured dragon-flies; the banks fringed with pink willow-herb, the yellow flag, or the aspiring bulrush, and, just at the water edge, large tufts of the cerulean forget-me-not, while in the middle of the stream water-lilies, yellow and white, ride gently on the bosom of the water.

The forget-me-not, known botanically as the *Myosotis palustris*—

"That blue and bright-eyed flow'ret of the brook,
Hope's gentle gem, the sweet forget-me-not"—

(Coleridge)

is the best known of many brethren, the *Myosotis* being a rather numerous family, the genus numbering eight species. All these are often called scorpion grasses: thus there is the rock scorpion grass, the wood scorpion grass, much used by gardeners as a bedding plant, and the field scorpion grass; the aquatic situation and the large size of the flowers of the water scorpion grass, or forget-me-

not, sufficiently aid in identifying it amongst other members of the genus. These plants all derived their unpoetical names from a supposed resemblance between the curling head of flowers and the tail of a scorpion; thus Gerarde writes—"The whole branch of flowres doe turne themselves round like the scorpion's taile;" and as in the middle ages each plant was held to bear testimony to its efficacy in characters plain enough to those who would see them, these little plants were held to be a specific for the scorpion's bite, as also for that of the adder and all such venomous creatures. It may at first sight seem strange that in our favoured island this should be held so great a recommendation, but in more ignorant times it was believed that from many a nauseous mixture of science or fœtid natural pool the scorpion could be produced; in fact, the dread of it was quite a mediæval bugbear, and a plant that would cure its deadly bite was one of the desiderata of the age. In the same way we have the herb basil, a plant of potent influence against the basilisk, a still more terrible monster.[111]

The botanical name, *Mysotis*, is derived from two Greek words, signifying mouse and ear, in allusion to the shape of its leaves; a rather far-fetched idea, however, as the resemblance is at all events no greater to that than to many other things, nor nearer than that reached by many other plants.

Though several plants have borne the cherished name, the present flower has only been recognised for about fifty years as the forget-me-not. The mediæval writers apply the name to a very different plant, the yellow bugle, or ground pine, an insignificant herb with very inconspicuous flowers, and so limited in its growth that it is only found in a few of the eastern and south-eastern counties of England. It at first sight seems very difficult to account for such a plant receiving such a name, but the nauseous taste the leaves leave in the mouth if tasted is the decidedly far-fetched reason assigned. The name has also been bestowed on a

species of wood-sage, and on the germander speedwell, in the latter case from the fleeting character of the blossoms, which, falling to the ground as soon as touched, may be imagined to exclaim—"Speedwell, forget me not," as a valedictory address. In many cases, however, and this appears to be one, it is not possible to account for the origin of a popular name, as it is at least as easy to coin a legend or theory to fit a name as to reverse the process, and many of the so-called explanations must therefore be taken with a certain limitation.

The beauty of the present holder of the name is, however, sufficient claim on our recognition of its right to bear the title, and a considerably better right than any claim based by its predecessors on their either nauseous or fugacious character, qualities that, happily, our little turquoise gem of the waters does not possess. The legend of Bishop Mant is widely known, but can hardly here be omitted; it is, however, an afterthought, being written by him when the little myosote had already been enthroned as a tender flower of love.

"Together they sate by a river's side,
A knight and a lady gay,
And they watched the deep and eddying tide,
Round a flowery islet stray.

"And 'O for that flower of brilliant hue,'
Then said the lady fair,
'To grace my neck with the blossoms blue,
And braid my nut-brown hair!'

"The knight has plunged in the whirling wave,
All for his lady's smile,
And he swims the stream with courage brave,
And he gained yon flowery isle:

"And his fingers have cropped the blossoms blue,
And the prize they backward bear,
To deck his love with the brilliant hue,
And braid her nut-brown hair.

"But the way is long and the current strong,
And alas for that gallant knight!
For the waves prevail, and his stout arms fail,
Though cheered by his lady's sight.

"Then the blossoms blue to the bank he threw
Ere he sank in the eddying tide!
And 'Lady, I'm gone—thine own true knight—
Forget me not!' he cried.

"This farewell pledge the lady caught,
And hence, as legends say,
The flower is a sign to awaken thought
For friends who are far away.

"For the lady fair of her knight so true
Still remembered the hapless lot,
And she cherished the flower of brilliant hue,
And she braided her hair with the blossoms blue,
And then called it 'Forget-me-not.'"

The same little flower is a great favourite not only throughout Europe but in Persia, and may often be seen represented in oriental MSS., or on vases and suchlike objects. The Persian poet Shiraz narrates a legend that is at once a testimony to its charms and an explanation of its wide diffusion; it is as follows:—"In the golden mornings of the early world, an angel sat weeping outside the closed gates of Eden,[112] for he had fallen from his high estate through loving a daughter of earth, nor was he permitted to enter again until she whom he loved had planted the flowers of the forget-me-not in every corner of the earth. So the angel returned to the earth and assisted her, and they went hand-in-hand over the world planting the forget-me-not, and when their task was ended entered Eden together, for she, without tasting the bitterness of death, became immortal, like the angel whose love her beauty had won when she sat by the river twining her hair with the forget-me-not."

The beautiful water-lily, the *Nymphæa alba*, naïad of our

English pools, we have already had occasion to refer to, and little, therefore, now remains to be added. Our poets introduce it by both its English and euphonious botanical name. The following verse of Shelley appears to us perfect, recalling to our minds, in a way that leaves nought to be desired, the splendour of the flower, as it gently heaves on the surface of the water.

"Broad water-lilies lay tremulously,
And starry river-buds glimmered by,
And around them the soft stream did glide and dance
With a motion of sweet sound and radiance."

Pickering, on the other hand, uses the more classical appellation, as we see in the following verse from one of his poems—

"And everywhere
Along the plashy marge, and shallow bed
Of the still waters, they innumerous spread;
Rock'd gently there,
The beautiful Nymphæa pillows its bright head."

The old belief that the water-lily retires to rest beneath the surface of the water, rising again to meet the morrow's sun, has not that foundation in fact that we could desire for a poetical idea so wide-spread and so ancient. Even in the time of Pliny the idea was accepted, for in speaking of the Egyptian lotus, the famous water-lily of the Nile, he says—"It is said, moreover, as touching the Egyptian lotus, that in the Euphrates the very head of the stalk, together with the flower, is plunged beneath the water until midnight, but that after that time it beginneth to rise by little and little, and by the sun-rising appeareth above the water and openeth its flower."

"Sheltering the coot's or wild duck's nest,
And where the timid halcyon[113] hides,
The willow-herb in crimson dressed
Waves with Arundo[114] o'er the tides;
And there the bright Nymphæa loves to lave,
Or spread her golden orbs[115] upon the dimpling wave."

Charlotte Smith.

The flowering rush, or *Butomus umbellatus* of botanical nomenclature, though not so well known as the water-lily, is not the least graceful of the many beautiful aquatic flowers.

"'Mid the flags that fringe the streamlet's bed,
The stately Butomus rears her head,
Like a naïad crowned with a flowery wreath,
She rose from the waters that flowed beneath.

"It was lovely to look on that splendid flower,
So richly endowed with beauty's dower,
And when we turned from the river's shore,
To our homes the graceful stranger we bore.

"But the glow of her roseate charms had fled,
When a few fleeting hours had passed o'er her head,
For no more 'mid the grass in the verdant mead,
Did the tranquil waters her loveliness feed.

"And fancy might dream that the pale leaves sighed,
As though they mourned for the flowing tide;
She could not live from her home afar,
And she faded before the evening star."

Its name is more poetical in sound than in sense, *Butomus* being derived from two Greek words signifying an ox and to cut, because the sharp, sword-like leaves injure the mouths of cattle should they unwarily browse on them as they grow at the side of the stream.

Conspicuous amongst our ferns, from its size and the handsome character of its growth, stands the royal fern, or flowering fern, the *Osmunda regalis.* Though ordinarily growing some four feet high, it may, in exceptionably favourable circumstances, be met with eight or even ten feet high, and its noble growth makes its regal title well deserved, for it is by far the most majestic of our indigenous ferns. It thrives best in boggy and marshy situations, and, though widely distributed in England, is especially abundant and luxuriant in Ireland, and is no less at home in Russia, Italy,

India, Algeria, Natal, Madagascar, Newfoundland, Mexico, and Brazil, than by the sides of the lakes and placid streams of England.

It is alluded to by Wordsworth in one of his descriptions of the lake scenery of Westmoreland—

> "Many such there are,
> Fair forms and flowers, and chiefly that tall fern
> So stately, of the Queen Osmunda named;
> Plant lovelier in its retired abode
> On Grasmere's beach than naïad by the side
> Of Grecian brook, or Lady of the Mere,
> Sole sitting by the shores of old Romance."

The meaning of the botanical name is not quite clear; it will be seen that Wordsworth refers to some mythical Queen Osmunda, and the name probably was given in the first place in honour of some one, though more probably the unknown some one was some early herbalist, rather than one of regal blood. Osmund, in Saxon, signifies domestic peace, being derived from *os*, a house, and *mund*, peace. Linnæus derives the word from the Latin verb *osmundare*, but the reason why is by no means obvious; we must therefore conclude that it is one of those old-established botanical names whose origin is lost in obscurity. Those of an imaginative turn of mind have asserted that it is historic, and, as in the case of the forget-me-not, a legend has been duly provided for the emergency; it is to the following effect:—"At Loch Tyne dwelt the waterman Osmund. Fairest among maidens was the daughter of Osmund. Her light-brown hair and glowing cheek told of her Saxon origin, and her light steps bounded over the green turf like a young fawn in his native glades. Often in the stillness of a summer's even did the mother and her fair-haired child sit beside the lake to watch the dripping and the flashing of the father's oars as he skimmed right merrily towards them over the deep blue waters. Sounds, as of hasty steps, were heard one day, and presently a company of

fugitives told with breathless haste that the cruel Danes were making way towards the ferry. Osmund heard them with fear. Suddenly the shouts of furious men came remotely on the ear. The fugitives rushed on. Osmund stood for a moment; then, snatching up his oars, he rowed his trembling wife and fair child to a small island covered with great ferns, and, helping them to land, bade them to lie down within their shelter. Scarcely had the ferryman returned to his cottage than a company of Danes rushed in; but they hurt him not, for they knew he could do them service. During the day and night did Osmund row backwards and forwards ferrying troops of these fierce men. When the last company was put on shore, Osmund, kneeling beside the bank, returned heartfelt thanks to heaven for the preservation of his wife and child. Often in after years did Osmund speak of that day's peril; and his fair child, grown up to womanhood, called the tall fern by her father's name."

Personally, we decline to believe in the apocryphal fair child or in the base-hearted boatman, who might just as well have stayed with them on the island in concealment as gone back and offered his services to his country's enemies; nor shall we believe in the broken sentences and other attempts to make it read like some old chronicle; old chronicles record the deeds of worthier than he. As we read that often in after years did Osmund speak of that day's peril, we have not even the melancholy satisfaction of feeling that after the Danes had gone some few of the fugitives probably crept from their hiding-places—for he does not appear to have helped any of these over—and administered the ancient equivalent of Lynch law on him for aiding and abetting the foe.

We turn now to the open common, where the furze, the broom, or the heath spread out before us their glowing sheets of crimson or gold. The furze, the *Ulex Europæus*, is also called, both in poetry and in various country dialects, the gorse and the whin, and a few

words on each of these may not be without value, as we too frequently get into a way of using words without at all times considering that they are but symbols of ideas, and that what we really often need, if we desire to know anything of the history of a plant, is to analyse the names that it has at different times or in different places received. One of the first things we thus notice is that it is evidently an indigenous plant, all the roots of the derivations show that to be the case. Its first name, furze, is from the Anglo-Saxon *fyrs*, and was given to the plant from the resemblance of its spines to the leaves of the fir-tree. The true leaves of the gorse are situated at the base of the spines, but are so minute that they escape observation. Gorse is the more modern equivalent for the Anglo-Saxon *gòrst*, and signifies waste, or open, in allusion to the breezy open lands on which it delights to grow; while whin is in signification the useless plant, being derived from the Celtic *chwyn*, weeds, useless wild growth.

> "Beside yon straggling fence that skirts the way,
> With blossomed furze unprofitably gay."
>
> *Goldsmith.*

The furze is essentially the plant of the open wastes, and when the heather and the furze are both in blossom few spots are more delightful than some high-lying moor thus clothed. The furze is at all times beautiful, since its branches are always verdant, and at all seasons of the year some of its golden blossoms may be gathered, for even in the depth of winter they may be met with—

> "A token to the wintry earth that beauty liveth still;"

from February to July it is, however, in richest blossom.

> "The common overgrown with fern, and rough
> With prickly gorse, that, shapeless and deformed,
> And dangerous to the touch, has yet its bloom,
> And decks itself with ornaments of gold."
>
> *Cowper.*

The furze labours under the heavy disadvantage of being too

common; were it not so its beauties would be more appreciated, and we should treasure it as it deserves. In the northern counties of Europe, where it will not grow in the open air, it is one of the choice plants of the greenhouse. It is related that when the celebrated Dillenius first visited England and saw our commons one sheet of gold from the masses of furze, the plant that he had hitherto only been able to rear as an exotic, he sank on his knees in grateful delight and admiration. The same story is, however, related of Linnæus, and, pleasant as it would be to feel that it was true, we must perforce confess that it is but of doubtful authenticity.

Amongst country people we have met with the saying that "when furze is out of flower, then kissing is out of season;" the moral, of course, being that as at all times some few blossoms may be found, such a symbol of affection must always be seasonable.

Thomson, in one passage in his "Seasons," speaks of it as "the flowering furze poured out profusely," and in another place as the "ragged furze," an epithet that is, however, scarcely just, as even on the most exposed situations its growth is ordinarily compact.

The following lines of Howitt have the true appreciative ring in them:—

"Who has not dreamed a world of bliss
On a bright sunny noon like this,
While all around him seemed to be
Just as in joyous infancy?
Who has not loved at such an hour—
Upon the heath, in birchen bower,
Lulled in the poet's dreamy mood—
Its wild and sunny solitude?
Love you not then to list and hear
The crackling of the gorse flowers near—
The twittering of the bird that dwells
Among the heath's delicious bells?
When round your head o'er fern and blade,

Insects in green and gold arrayed—
The sun's gay tribes—have lightly strayed."

It is scarcely just to charge the furze with being but unprofitably gay, and though we here make no pretence of dwelling on the economic value of our plants, we may justly give such few details as will clear the plant from being but an idle show. The following are but a few of the uses to which it is applied. Being first bruised by a small engine, it is found to be a valuable fodder for cattle and horses. It is employed for hedges, and planted as cover for game, and will grow near the sea; it is therefore of great value in protecting young plantations from the salt-laden gales. It is greatly used as fuel, yielding a large crop of faggots every three years for many years; and its ashes form a valuable dressing for the land. These uses alone suffice to entitle it to rank as being not merely ornamental, but also practically useful, though we do not ourselves feel bound to judge everything by this very utilitarian standard, and to repudiate everything that can only show itself beautiful. Beauty is itself an end, and if the great sheets of gorse and heath that stretch for miles in one unbroken mass of colour charm the eye and lead the heart in gratitude to Him who has thus profusely spread these riches for the enjoyment of all, is not that enough? Need we, to justify our pleasure, reflect that the gorse if chopped up will feed a cow, or that the heath may be made up into brooms, and realise a profit at threepence?

The broom, *Sarothamnus scoparius*, is another very characteristic plant of the open moorland, though it appears to thrive better when somewhat sheltered, as when it fringes the sides of some old gravel-pit or hill-side. Its familiar name points to its old use in the manufacture of brooms,[116] and its generic name, *Sarothamnus*, has a similar meaning, being compounded of two Greek words signifying shrub and to sweep. Like the furze, the sea-breeze does not hurt it, it therefore grows freely on the sandy

wastes that in some places fringe the shore, and in Holland, and some parts of the French coast, is planted on the embankments that its roots may assist in binding the loose sand together.

It is a favourite with our poets, thus Chaucer has the line—

"Amid the broom he basked him in the sun;"

while Shakspere makes its tangled thicket a retreat for the love-lorn in the following passage:—

"Thy broom groves,
Whose shadow the dismissed bachelor loves."

It is included by Spenser in one of his sonnets, in which he enumerates several beautiful flowers, as the rose and eglantine, and of this he says too—

"Sweet is the broom flowre."

Its delicate odour, less powerful than that of its near relative, the furze, is dwelt on by Wilson as one of its charms.

"On the green slope
Of a romantic glade we sate us down,
Amid the fragrance of the yellow broom."

Its evergreen character, rendering it a beautiful shrub when most others are leafless, endears it to Wordsworth.

"Am I not
In truth a favoured plant?
On me such bounty summer showers
That I am covered o'er with flowers—
And when the frost is in the sky,
My branches are so fresh and gay,
That you might look on me and say
This plant can never die."

Its sturdy growth on the sterile common or the rocky mountain-side is another feature that commends it to the eye of the poet. It is with Thomson—

"The thick, entangled broom"

"And now, to issue from the glen,
No pathway meets the wanderer's ken,
Unless he climb, with footing nice,
A far-projecting precipice.
The broom's tough roots his ladder made,
The hazel saplings lent their aid;
And thus an airy point he won,
Where, gleaming with the setting sun,
One burnished sheet of living gold,
Loch Katrine lay beneath him rolled."

Scott.

Naturally, however, the beauty of its large and brilliant yellow flowers has most attracted notice, thus Cowper speaks of—

"The broom,
Yellow and bright as bullion unalloyed."

A very similar image is used by Wordsworth in the lines—

"The broom,
Full-flower'd, and visible on every steep,
Along the copses runs in veins of gold."

'Like the mountain-side wilds of the yellow broom blowing."

Mary Howitt.

"Their groves of sweet myrtle let foreign lands reckon,
Where bright beaming summers exalt the perfume;
Far dearer to me yon lone glen of green breckan,
Wi' the burn stealing under the long yellow broom."

Burns.

We must, in conclusion, devote a few lines to the mention of the plant that, from its beauty and profusion, gives its name to the wild tracts of country that it so adorns—the fine-leaved heath, or *Erica cinerea.* The plant is in Scotland—where it is exceedingly abundant—called ling, a word used by Mary Howitt in the line—

"And the old forest pride, the red wastes of the ling."

We are unable, though we have met with one or two plausible theories, to point out the significance of this local name. The plant is an especial favourite with bees, and heather honey is always held

—at least in rustic circles—in higher appreciation than that which is the produce of hives remote from the open moorland. In Thomson's description of the meadow in spring we find the passage—

> "Here their delicious task the fervent bees,
> In swarming millions, tend; around, athwart,
> Through the soft air the busy nations fly,
> Cling to the bud, and, with inserted tube,
> Suck its pure essence, its ethereal soul;
> And oft, with bolder wing, they soaring dare
> The purple heath, or where the wild thyme grows,
> And yellow load them with the luscious spoil."

The value of the flower to the bees is again touched on by the authoress whom we have already quoted, Mary Howitt, where in one of her poems she speaks of—

> "Those wastes of heath
> Stretching for miles to lure the bee;
> Where the wild bird, on pinions strong,
> Wheels round, and pours his piping song,[117]
> And timid creatures wander free."

Having thus far suggested somewhat of the wealth of interest that may be derived from the perusal of our poets and brought them face to face with Nature, we must be content to leave this section of our subject, well knowing that our work has necessarily been very imperfect, since to mention all the plants to which reference is made in our poetry, and to quote what all those who may claim to rank as poets have said of any one particular flower, and still more, of all our plants, would have required a far more ponderous volume, and would, after all, have served no good end that is not as well served by the more limited treatment that is here given.

CHAPTER III.

WE now propose more particularly to consider, in conclusion, the inner and symbolic meanings that have been derived from some few of our plants, and to point out some of those lessons that they have been made to yield. We have, necessarily, to some extent touched upon this, as it has been found in previous sections that an inner meaning was often hidden beneath the outward seeming, and it was at times necessary to elucidate it that the full force of the poet's meaning might be felt; these inner meanings, hitherto subordinate to our general remarks, will now, however, form the basis of our closing chapter.

Symbolism, largely used in the earlier ages, is a picture-language, an appeal through the eye to the mind, a clothing of simple forms with an inner significance, that, whether at first sight obvious or not, makes them teachers of some truth, memorials of some event. This added beauty thus suggested is ordinarily religious in character, though it may at other times serve to remind us of more mundane things, when it becomes historic. The lilies of the field, the symbols of an overruling Providence and paternal care, may be cited as an illustration of the inner and religious meaning; while the rose of the heralds, as applied to the families of York and Lancaster, may be quoted as bearing an inner and symbolic meaning of the lower or historic type.

The Bible abounds with illustrations of this symbolic use of plants, the lowly lily and the straggling bramble no less than the lordly cedar being pressed into the service. The spreading palm tree and the withering grass of the house-top each alike contribute to the illustration of some solemn truth, and lead the thought from the fugitive things of earth to the realities of the great hereafter. To those who will thus give heed the earth will be a teacher, and the wayside-weed the decking of the ante-chamber of the eternal courts of Paradise; the golden shield of the lowly dandelion may serve as a buckler against the assaults of doubt, and the little daisy become a preacher no less persuasive than Chrysostom, the "golden-mouthed."

> "Soft roll your incense, herbs, and fruits, and flowers,
> In mingled clouds to Him whose sun exalts,
> Whose breath perfumes you, and whose pencil paints."
>
> *Thomson.*

The rose, an emblem, as we have already seen, of earthly love, has also been employed as a symbol of heavenly love, besides having a national and historic significance. A golden rose has been the highest mark of favour that a monarch could receive from the Pope of Rome for services rendered to the church; our King Henry VIII. became the recipient of one from Alexander VI., together with the title of "Defender of the Faith." The "Rose of Sharon" of the Bible is no doubt the origin of the use of the plant in religious symbolism, though, botanically, the plant known by that name bears no relationship to the true roses. Amongst the numerous titles given to the Virgin we find that of Santa Maria della Rosa, a title therefore given too to several pictures in various continental collections, in which a rose is placed either in her hand or in that of the infant Christ: the Virgin is also called the Rosa Cœli, or Rose of Heaven.[118]

A tree of the common wild rose, the *Rosa canina* of botanical nomenclature, and the species that is so abundantly distributed

throughout our own land, grows in the crypt of the Cathedral of Hildesheim in Hanover, and has the reputation of being more than one thousand years old. This would appear to be a statement far more easy of assertion than proof, but we read that when Bishop Hezilo rebuilt the cathedral after its destruction by fire in the year 1061, this rose tree was even then so far interesting from its age that its roots were carefully built round, and on this vault the walls of the crypt were raised, an opening being left in the outer wall, and the branches carefully trained over its surface. The tree is still flourishing, and held in great veneration by the inhabitants, who carefully preserve it from any injury, not even a flower being allowed to be gathered from it. Such a natural curiosity must of necessity have its legend attached, and it is as follows:—"In the year 814, the Emperor Ludwig, "the pious," son of Charlemagne, while staying with his court at Elze, was desirous of hunting in the forest that once occupied the site of the city of Hildesheim. After a mass had been said at the appointed place of meeting, the party dispersed, the sacred elements being inadvertently left on the ground and forgotten by those whose desire to join in the chase seems to have exceeded their sense of the obligations of their spiritual functions. On the following day, on passing the spot, the sacramental vessels were discovered, overshadowed by the tender branches of a rose that had sprung up in the night, filling the air with its fragrance, and protecting them from all hurt. At the command of the king a chapel was built, the altar being placed at the root of the sacred rose, a rose that never since has ceased to bloom year after year. The shoots of the plant now cover some thirty feet of the external wall of the eastern face of the crypt.

The rose is now the recognised emblem of England, in the same way that the thistle and shamrock have been dedicated to Scotland and Ireland respectively: our readers may see all three plants figured on our florins. It is also very familiar to us from

its connection with those civil discords that from this plant were named the Wars of the Roses, the Lancastrian faction taking the red rose as their cognisance, while the Yorkists fought beneath the white. The following extract, from the first part of Shakspere's King Henry VI., Act II., Scene 4, though rather lengthy, is sufficiently interesting to justify our insertion of it. The scene is laid in the Temple Garden, and the following actors take part in it—the Earls of Somerset, Suffolk, and Warwick, Richard Plantagenet, Vernon, and another lawyer.

"*Plan.*—Great lords and gentlemen, what means this silence?
Dare no man answer in a case of truth?
Suff.—Within the temple hall we were too loud;
The garden here is more convenient.
Plan.—Then say at once, if I maintain the truth;
Or else was wrangling Somerset in the error?
Suff.—'Faith, I have been a truant in the law;
And never yet could frame my will to it;
And, therefore, frame the law unto my will.
Som.—Judge you, my lord of Warwick, then between us.
War.—Between two hawks, which flies the higher pitch,
Between two dogs, which hath the deeper mouth,
Between two blades, which bears the better temper,
Between two horses, which doth bear him best,
Between two girls, which hath the merriest eye,
I have, perhaps, some shallow spirit of judgment;
But in these nice sharp quillets of the law,
Good faith, I am no wiser than a daw.
Plan.—Tut, tut, here is a mannerly forbearance:
The truth appears so naked on my side,
That any purblind eye may find it out.
Som.—And on my side it is so well apparelled,
So clear, so shining, and so evident,
That it will glimmer through a blind man's eye.
Plan.—Since you are tongue-tied, and so loath to speak,
In dumb significants proclaim your thoughts:
Let him that is a true-born gentleman,
And stands upon the honour of his birth,
If he suppose that I have pleaded truth,
From off this brier pluck a white rose with me.

Som.—Let him that is no coward, nor no flatterer,
But dare maintain the party of the truth,
Pluck a red rose from off this thorn with me.
War.—I love no colours; and, without all colour
Of base insinuating flattering,
I pluck this white rose, with Plantagenet.
Suff.—I pluck this red rose, with young Somerset;
And say withal, I think he held the right.
Ver.—Stay, lords and gentlemen; pluck no more
Till you conclude—that he upon whose side
The fewest roses are cropped from the tree,
Shall yield the other in the right opinion.
Som.—Good Master Vernon, it is well objected;
If I have fewest I subscribe in silence.
Plan.—And I.
Ver.—Then, for the truth and plainness of the case,
I pluck this pale and maiden blossom here,
Giving my verdict on the white rose side.
Som.—Prick not your finger as you pluck it off;
Lest, bleeding, you do paint the white rose red,
And fall on my side so against your will.
Ver.—If I, my lord, for my opinion bleed,
Opinion shall be surgeon to my hurt,
And keep me on the side where still I am.
Som.—Well, well, come on; who else?
Law.—Unless my study and my books be false,
The argument you held was wrong in you;
In sign whereof I pluck a white rose too.
Plan.—Now, Somerset, where is your argument?
Som.—Here, in my scabbard; meditating that
Shall die your white rose in a bloody red.
Plan.—Meanwhile, your cheeks do counterfeit our roses;
For pale they look with fear, as witnessing
The truth on our side.
Som.—No, Plantagenet, 'tis not for fear, but anger, that thy cheeks
Blush for pure shame, to counterfeit our roses;
And yet thy tongue will not confess thy error.
Plan.—Hath not thy rose a canker, Somerset?
Som.—Hath not thy rose a thorn, Plantagenet?
Plan.—Ay, sharp and piercing, to maintain his truth;
Whiles thy consuming canker eats his falsehood.

Som.—Well, I'll find friends to wear my bleeding roses,
That shall maintain what I have said is true,
Where false Plantagenet dare not to be seen.
Plan.—Now, by this maiden blossom in my hand,
I scorn thee and thy fashion, peevish boy.
Suff.—Turn not thy scorns this way, Plantagenet.
Plan.—Proud Poole, I will; and scorn both him and thee.
Suff.—I'll turn my part thereof into thy throat.
Som.—Away, away, good William de la Poole!
We grace the yeoman by conversing with him.
War.—Now, by God's will, thou wrong'st him, Somerset;
His grandfather was Lionel, Duke of Clarence,
Third son to the third Edward, King of England;
Spring crestless yeomen from so deep a root?
Plan.—He bears them on the place's privilege,
Or durst not, for his craven heart, say thus.
Som.—By Him that made me, I'll maintain my words
On any plot of ground in Christendom:
Was not thy father, Richard, Earl of Cambridge,
For treason executed in our late king's days?
And, by his treason, stand'st not thou attainted,
Corrupted, and exempt from ancient gentry?
His trespass yet lives guilty in thy blood;
And, till those be restored, thou art a yeoman.
Plan.—My father was attached, not attainted;
Condemn'd to die for treason, but no traitor;
And that I'll prove on better men than Somerset,
Were growing time once ripen'd to my will.
For your partaker Poole, and you yourself,
I'll note you in my book of memory,
To scourge you for this apprehension:
Look to it well; and say you are well warn'd.
Som.—Ay, thou shalt find us ready for thee still:
And know us, by these colours, for thy foes;
For these my friends, in spite of thee, shall wear.
Plan.—And, by my soul, this pale and angry rose,
As cognisance of my blood-drinking hate,
Will I for ever, and my faction, wear;
Until it wither with me to my grave,
Or flourish to the height of my degree.
Suff.—Go forward, and be chok'd with thy ambition!
And so farewell, until I meet thee next. *(Exit.)*

Som.—Have with thee, Poole.—Farewell, ambitious Richard. *(Exit.)*
Plan.—How I am braved, and must perforce endure it!
War.—This blot, that they object against your house,
Shall be wip'd out in the next parliament,
Call'd for the truce of Winchester and Gloster:
And, if thou be not then created York,
I will not live to be accounted Warwick.
Meantime, in signal of my love to thee,
Against proud Somerset and William Poole,
Will I upon thy party wear this rose:
And here I prophesy,—this brawl to-day,
Grown to this faction in the temple garden,
Shall send, between the red rose and the white,
A thousand souls to death and deadly night."

This destructive quarrel, whose deadliness far exceeded the computation of Warwick in the last line of our extract—for in the one battle alone of Blore-heath the Lancastrians themselves lost upwards of two thousand men—was at last terminated by the marriage of Henry VII. with Elizabeth of York, and the Tudor sovereigns took as their badge a rose half red half white, a symbol of the alliance of the two rival houses.

Gerarde, writing in the reign of Elizabeth, contrives to introduce amidst his botanical labours a little adulation of that monarch, for when he comes to write of the rose he quaintly apologises in the following style for the painful necessity that his system of classification had reduced him to:—"The plant of roses, though it be a shrub full of prickles, yet it had beene more fit and convenient to have placed it with the most glorious flowers of the world, than to insert the same here among base and thorny shrubs, for the rose doth deserve the chief and prime place among all flowers whatsoever, being not only esteemed for his beauty, vertues, and his fragrant and odoriferous smell, but also because it is the honour and ornament of our English Scepter, in the uniting of those two most Royall Houses of Lancaster and Yorke."

Cupid—no politician—appears to have laughed to scorn these

partisan feelings, if the "Red and White Rose" of Somerville may be taken as any authority, and we should strongly incline ourselves to the belief that it may be.

"If this pale rose offend your sight
It in your bosom wear;
'Twill blush to find itself less white,
And turn Lancastrian there.

"But, Celia, should the red be chose,
With gay vermilion bright,
'Twould sicken at each blush that glows,
And in despair turn white.

"Let politicians idly prate,
Their Babels build in vain;
As uncontrollable as fate,
Imperial Love shall reign.

"Each haughty faction shall obey,
And Whigs and Tories join;
Submit to your despotic sway,
Confess your right divine."

The shamrock of Ireland is a scarcely less familiar badge than the English rose, and even its name has an ancient ring, being equivalent to the old Irish *seamrog*, or the Gaelic *seamrag*. According to the legend, St. Patrick, while preaching in Ireland, failed to make his rude hearers at all comprehend the doctrine of a Tri-une Deity, until, glancing downwards, he spied at his feet a trefoil leaf, and made its familiar form a symbol of the truth he would impress upon them, and ever since the conversion to Christianity St. Patrick has been the patron saint of the nation, and the little trefoil leaf its chosen badge and emblem; the 17th of March being St. Patrick's Day, when the shamrock is largely worn on the persons of enthusiastic nationalists.

A very considerable diversity of opinion exists as to what plant shall be deemed the true shamrock, for while some believe the species known botanically as the *Trifolium minus* to be the typical

form, others think that the *Trifolium repens* has a higher claim. Others, again, assert that both these species of clover are plants of comparatively recent introduction into Ireland, and therefore, even if now accepted as the shamrock, they could not have been the plant that attracted the notice of the saint, whose visit is supposed to have been made somewhere about the year 440: the wood-sorrel, a plant that delights to grow in copses and woods, has therefore been deemed the true plant. In Fyius Morison's "History of the Civil Wars in Ireland between 1599 and 1603," we find the following passage:—"They willingly eat the herb schamrock, being of a sharp taste;" a passage that at least shows that about that date the wood-sorrel was called the shamrock, since it is the only trefoil leaf of acid flavour, and therefore, in old writers, called sometimes sour trefoil, and at other times wood-sour. A further argument in favour of the wood-sorrel, slight in itself, though assisting to form a cumulative weight of evidence, is found in the rigid adherence of the leaf forms to the trefoil type. To find a "four-leaved shamrock" would never have been held to be so sure a passport to good fortune if such a discovery were at all common. In the wood-sorrel the find would rarely, if ever, take place; while in the various species of clover such modifications of the type are by no means so scarce.

According to Moore, three attributes of the Irish people are symbolised by the trefoil, as we may see in the following lines in its praise:—

"Through Erin's isle,
To sport awhile,
As Love and Valour wandered,
With Wit, the sprite,
Whose quiver bright,
A thousand arrows squandered;
Where'er they pass,
A triple grass
Shoots up with dew-drops steaming,

As softly green
As emeralds seen
Through purest crystal gleaming.
Oh the shamrock, the green, immortal shamrock!
Chosen leaf
Of bard and chief,
Old Erin's native shamrock!

"Says Valour, 'See,
They spring from me,
Those leafy gems of morning!'
Says Love, 'No, no,
For me they grow,
My fragrant path adorning!'
But Wit perceives
The triple leaves,
And cries, 'Oh! do not sever
A type that blends
Three god-like friends,
Love, Valour, Wit, for ever!'
Oh the shamrock; the green, immortal shamrock!
Chosen leaf
Of bard and chief,
Old Erin's native shamrock!"

The thistle, the chosen emblem of the Scotch, was, it is legendarily said, adopted by that people in memorial of the deliverance of their land from an invasion of the Danes through its agency. A large force of the enemy, having landed, were marching stealthily on the unsuspecting force that should have been on the alert to receive them, when one of the invaders, treading with bare feet in the darkness on one of these plants, uttered a cry of pain that sufficed to warn the Scottish force of the imminent peril to which they had been exposed, and gave them such timely notice as enabled them to beat off their crafty foes. The motto, *Nemo me impune lacessit*, that always accompanies the heraldic use of the thistle, is a very suggestive one, and may well serve as a sort of moral or application to the legend we have just

quoted. Opinions have been much divided as to which species may justly be considered the typical one, but the matter is perhaps scarcely worth a controversy, as the form employed is a somewhat conventional one, no botanical exactitude being necessary in the heraldic use of the plant, and as we have already in another work—*Plants, their Natural Growth and Ornamental Treatment*—gone at some considerable length into the subject, it does not here seem advisable to go over the ground again. We have in that work given several illustrations of the use of the plant as a symbol both in art and in poetry; one instance, therefore, of the latter, derived from Burns, will now suffice—

> "The rough burr-thistle, spreading wide
> Amang the bearded bear;
> I turned the weeder-clips aside,
> And spared the symbol dear."

In the Bible, thorns and thistles are classed together as noxious plants, the result of the primal curse of the earth, the penalty of man's disobedience. "Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life: thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."

The columbine, at one time a symbol of lonely grief—

> "The columbine, by lonely wanderer taken
> Is then ascribed to such as are forsaken"—
> *(Brown's "British Pastorals")*

was, with the more familiar broom-flower, the *Planta genista*, a badge of the royal house that thence derived its historic name, Plantagenet. In a portrait of Richard II. at Wilton, he is repre-

sented as wearing a collar of broom-pods, with his favourite badge of the white heart as a pendant. St. Louis of France took as a badge a daisy, in compliment to his wife, Marguerite of Provence. On his marriage, he instituted the order of the *Cosse de Geneste*, selecting as emblem the broom-flower, and adding to it the motto, *Exaltat humiles*—"He exalteth the humble."

To go at any length into the subject of the badges borne by various distinguished families or individuals would entail a far greater demand upon our space and the patience of the reader than appears to be at all desirable; some few examples may, however, be given, as there is often a good deal of meaning in them, and some of those before whose notice we may now be bringing the matter for the first time, may find the details so far interesting as to induce them themselves hereafter to search for other examples.

Ferdinand Carafa, Marquis of Santo Lucito, bore as device a lotus flower in a river with the sun shining upon it, accompanied by the motto, *Sic diva lux mihi*—"Such is the Divine light to me"—an allusion to the old belief already referred to, that the flowers of the lotus sank beneath the stream at sunset and rose again to the surface, as the life-giving rays of the sun fell on them, on the morrow.

Charles de Guise, Cardinal of Lorraine, adopted as device a pyramid—the most stable of all forms—clothed with ivy, and took the motto, *Te stante virebo*—"While you stand I shall flourish."

Marc Antonio Colonna bore two branches crossed, one being cypress and the other laurel, and emphasised it by the motto, *Erit altera merces*—"One shall be the reward; death or victory"—a sentiment fairly paralleled in Lord Nelson's speech—"A peerage or Westminster Abbey."

Rudolph I. of Hapsburg chose as badge a hand bearing a mace and olive branch, and the motto, *Utrum lubet*—"Whichever you

please"—taken together a very significant combination, and one to be well thought over and taken to heart by all those who crossed his path.

Albert (1621), an archduke of Austria, adopted as his cognisance an arm holding a sword wreathed with olive and palm, and added to it the motto, *Pulchrum est clarescere utroque*—"It is well to shine in either;" that is to say, either in peace, as symbolised by the olive, or in war, as expressed by the palm branch of victory.

Many other symbols, such as the lily, a type of purity, and therefore more especially dedicated to the Virgin, and the vine, as a type of Christ—"I am the true vine"—are to be met with in mediæval art and literature, while amongst the Egyptians the lotus, the sacred lily of the sacred Nile, a type of fertility, and the papyrus, a symbol of intellectual power, are no less common. As we have already elsewhere—*Principles of Ornamental Art*—gone very fully into the subject of symbolism, both of animal and vegetable forms, we refer our readers to our past labours, should they desire to see the subject treated at greater length, rather than repeat what we have already written.

The associations connected with many plants, beautiful in themselves, give them a yet greater interest; thus the snowdrop, a flower that in any case and at any season of the year would have been admired for its lowly and delicate beauty, has its interest tenfold increased by its association with the opening year.

"The snowdrop is the herald of the flowers,
Sent with its small white flag of truce, to plead
For its beleagured brethren; suppliantly
It prays stern Winter to withdraw his troop
Of winds and blustering storms; and having won
A smile of promise from its pitying foe,
Returns to tell the issue of its errand
To the expectant host."

Westwood.

The association of the flowers with the spring, the season when the little blossoms break from their frost-bound prison and rejoice in the sunlight, and when all nature seems in an especial degree joyous and beautiful, is well seen in the touching lament of Mary Queen of Scots on the approach of spring—

"Now Nature hangs her mantle green
On every blooming tree,
And spreads her sheets o' daisies white
Out o'er the grassy lea:
Now Phœbus[119] cheers the crystal streams,
And glads the azure skies;
But nought can glad the weary wight
That fast in durance lies.

"Now lav'rocks[120] wake the merry morn,
Aloft on dewy wing:
The merle,[121] in his noontide bower,
Makes woodland echoes ring:
The mavis[122] mild, wi' mony a note,
Sings drowsy day to rest;
In love and freedom they rejoice,
Wi' care nor thrall oppress.

"Now blooms the lily by the bank,
The primrose down the brae;
The hawthorn's[123] budding in the glen,
And milk-white is the slae;[124]
The meanest hind in fair Scotland
May rove their sweets amang;
But I, the queen of a' Scotland,
Maun lie in prison strang."

Burns.

The renewal of the face of nature in spring-time, after the weary months of winter, has not inaptly made this season a type of the eternal verities, the bursting forth of the blossoms of earth from their wintry tomb being a similitude of that resurrection when the earth shall yield up her dead, when the sea shall reveal her secrets, and the countless tribes of earth shall issue from their parent dust to stand in the presence of their God.

"There is a simple, pure delight,
Which the heart feasts on, in the sight
Of Nature, when aside she throws
The wintry cerements that enclose
Her vegetable forms, and keep
Their senses in sepulchral sleep.
Yet there are some, to whom, untaught
By holy love divine, the thought
Of Nature's renovating spring
May rather by dark contrast bring
Sad thoughts and cheerless. Thus on thee,
Sweet, rural bard of Sicily,
Sweet Moschus, by thy Dorian well
Reflection's bitter spirit fell,
And steeped in tears thy plaintive verse,
Hung on lamented Bion's hearse,[125]
'Alas, alas, the garden flower,
When, spent its transitory hour,
With shrivelled leaves and faded, dies.
Nipt on its native bed it lies,
Again the withered head shall rear,
And flourish yet another year.
But we meanwhile, of human birth,
The great, the brave, the wise of earth,
As soon as once o'erspent we die,
Within the earth's dark caverns lie,
Inglorious, and for ever keep
A long, an endless, wakeless sleep!'
Truce to the melancholy shrine!
Be rather ours this Lenten time,
This time of spring revived, to greet
Returning April's season sweet;
Pledge of the time, when like the flower,
Which now with renovated power
Is wakened, man again shall bloom;
Yet not like it in wintry gloom
Again to wither and decay,
But flourish in eternal day!
Then April, hail! With cheerful tone
I bid thee welcome: not alone
For that thou com'st and bring'st along

The sight, and smell, and tuneful song
Of leaf, and flower of mingled hue,
And many a plumèd warbler new;
But that with holy wisdom fraught,
Thou wak'st withal the grateful thought,
That, when these pleasant things are o'er,
Things still more pleasant are in store
In God's celestial paradise,[126]
For those that love Him; passing bliss
Which human eye or ear can scan,
Nor dwell they in the heart of man."

Bishop Mant.

The blossoms of spring, in their evanescence and frailty, point again to the necessity of so redeeming this present time, that there may not be but sadly unavailing regrets at its close.

"When May is in his prime,
Then may each heart rejoice;
When May bedecks each branch with green,
Each bird strains forth his voice.

"The lively sap creeps up
Into the blooming thorn;
The flowers, which cold in prison kept,
Now laugh the frost to scorn.

"All ye that live on earth,
And have your May at will,
Rejoice in May, as I do now,
And use your May with skill.

"Use May while that you may,
For May hath but his time;[127]
When all the fruit is gone, it is
Too late the tree to climb."

Edwards.

"The garlands fade that Spring so lately wove,
Each simple flower, which she had nursed in dew,
Anemones, that spangled every grove,
The primrose wan, and harebell mildly blue.
No more shall violets linger in the dell,
Or purple orchis variegate the plain,

Till Spring again shall call forth every bell,
And dress with humid hands her wreath again.
So, poor humanity, so frail, so fair,
Are the fond visions of thy early day,
Till tyrant passion, and corrosive care,
Bid all thy fairy colours fade away!
Another May new buds and flowers shall bring;
Oh! why has happiness no second spring?"

Charlotte Smith.

A commentary on the old, old story that was as sadly real to Solomon in all his regal splendour as to all the generations of men of all degrees of affluence or poverty that have felt the echo of his piteous cry in their hearts, and have felt with him the hollowness of all earthly joys—"I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards: I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kind of fruits. I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees: I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces: I gat me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and that of all sorts. So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained with me. And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy; for my heart rejoiced in all my labour: and this was my portion of all my labour. Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do; and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun."

It was not a mere piece of dreamy mysticism, but the expression of a simple truth, that utterance made more than a thousand years ago by the great father of the early African Church when this problem presented itself to him—"Thou madest us for Thyself, and our souls are restless till they find rest in Thee." Man, fallen sadly from his high estate, has yet not lost all of that Divine

image and likeness in which he was first created, and more, therefore, than the perishing joys of earth are needed for the yearning heart and the immortal spirit.

The blossoms of the earth, in their regular recurrence year by year, are so many reminders of the flight of time, and but few, if they cared to do so, could hope to feel for seventy seasons the sweet breath of the returning spring, or to feast their eyes thus often on the delicate beauty of the primrose; hence Wordsworth, with this thought in his heart, makes the "chaste snowdrop" not only the "venturous harbinger of spring," but the "pensive monitor of fleeting years."

Flowers are often employed by our poets as emblems of ruin and mortality; thus, to enforce the idea of the sorrows of King Lear, Shakspere introduces as accessories many of our more noxious weeds—

> "Alack! 'tis he; why, he was met even now,
> As mad as the vexed sea—singing aloud,
> Crowned with rank fumitor and furrow weeds,
> With harlochs,[128] hemlock, nettles, cuckoo-flowers,
> Darnel,[129] and all the idle weeds that grow
> In our sustaining corn."

He introduces three of the above again in his "Henry V." to aid the picture of material ruin caused by the devastating hand of War—

> "Why that the naked, poor, and mangled peace,
> Dear muse of arts, plenties, and joyful births,
> Should not, in this best garden of the world,
> Our fertile France, put up her lovely visage?
> Alas! she hath from France too long been chased,
> And all her husbandry doth lie on heaps,
> Corrupting in its own fertility;
> Her vine, the merry cheerer of the heart,
> Unprunèd dies; her hedges even pleached,
> Like prisoners wildly overgrown with hair,
> Put forth disordered twigs; her fallow leas

The darnel, hemlock, and rank fumitory
Doth root upon."

Many flowers, and notably the rose, have been, as we have already seen, accepted as symbols of love; we need therefore having already referred to several, do little more than mention the fact of such appropriation in this place: the following passage, however, from Theocritus introduces to us the poppy, emblem of somnolence and death, in an entirely new aspect, as a love test, and therefore, though the author has certainly no claim to rank as one of our own poets,[130] we insert it—

"By a prophetic poppy-leaf I found
Your changed affection, for it gave no sound,
Though in my hand struck hollow as it lay,
But quickly withered, like your love, away."

Shakspere, in the following lines, very gracefully and delicately touches on this floral symbolism:—

"From you I have been absent in the spring,
When proud-pied April, dressed in all his trim,
Hath put a spirit of youth in every thing;
That heavy Saturn laughed and leap'd with him.
Yet nor the lays of birds, nor the sweet smell
Of different flowers in odour and in hue,
Could make me any summer's story tell,
Or from their proud lap pluck them where they grew:
Nor did I wonder at the lilies white,
Nor praise the deep vermilion of the rose;
They were but sweet, but figures of delight,
Drawn after you; you pattern of all those,
Yet seemed it winter still, and you away,
As with your shadow, I with these did play."

Flowers have ever been regarded as the emblems of innocence and peace; many illustrations of this might be quoted from Wordsworth and our other poets of the natural school; the following extract from Wilson will, however, sufficiently exemplify this phase of our subject.[131]

"O blessed things!
At sight of this your perfect innocence,
The sterner thoughts of mankind melt away
Into a mood as mild as woman's dreams.
The strife of working intellect, the stir
Of hope's ambitions, the disturbing sound
Of fame, and all that worshipped pageantry
That ardent spirits burn for in their pride,
Fly like disparting clouds, and leave the soul
Pure and serene as the blue depths of heaven."

The grace of humility is symbolised by many a lowly flower. Hurdis, at all times graceful in feeling, chooses the little lily of the valley[132] as an emblem of this virtue.

"To the curious eye,
A little monitor presents her page
Of choice instruction, with her snowy bells—
The lily of the vale. She not affects
The public walk, nor gaze of midday sun;
She to no state or dignity aspires,
But silent and alone puts on her suit,
And sheds her lasting perfume, but for which
We had not known there was a thing so sweet[133]
Hid in the gloomy shade. So when the blast
Her sister-tribes confound, and to the earth
Stoops their high heads, that vainly were exposed,
She feels it not, but flourishes anew
Still shelter'd and secure."

The meek and quiet spirit that is in the sight of God of great price, and that forms the subject of one of the beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount, finds in the primrose, as we see in the following lines of Nicholl, an equally appropriate symbol.

"The hawthorn clusters bloom above;
The primrose hides below,
And on the lonely passer-by
A modest glance doth throw.

"The humble primrose' bonny face,
I meet it everywhere;

When other flowers disdain to bloom,
It comes and nestles there.

"Like God's own light, on every place,
In glory it doth fall,
And where its dwelling-place is made
It straightway hallows all!"

Peele, one of the older poets, writing about the middle of the sixteenth century, introduces the hawthorn and the primrose in a similar relation to that given above, though he adds other flowers to these—

"Under the hawthorn and the poplar tree
The humble florets all delight to be;
The primrose and the purple hyacinth,
The dainty violet and the wholesome mintha."

The willow, ordinarily chosen as an emblem of grief, is by one of our poets made a symbol of the humble spirit, though even here the idea of sorrow and patient suffering is not altogether eliminated—

"Green willow! o'er whom the perilous blast
Is sweeping roughly, thou dost seem to me
The patient image of humility:
Waiting in meekness till the storm be past,
Assured the hour of peace will come at last—
That there will be for thee a calm bright day,
When the dark clouds are gather'd far away."

Landon.

Even the weak and clinging nature of some of our plants has not escaped the notice of our poets. In the two following examples, the first, an extract from Shakspere, may be said to take the unfavourable, unlovely view; while the second, from Cowley, dwells on a pleasanter aspect—

"The pleachèd bower,
Where honeysuckles ripened by the sun
Forbid the sun to enter: like favourites
Made proud by princes, that advance their pride
Against that power that bred it."

The second example is suggested by the dodder,[124] a plant whose growth serves to illustrate to the poet the dependence of the woman on the man; taking the old Scriptural, rather than the modern "strong-minded" view of the subject—

"She must depend alone,
And nothing in herself can call her own,
Fed with his juice, she on his stalk is borne,
And thinks his leaves her head full well adorn.
Whate'er he be, she loves to take his name,
And must, with him, be every way the same."

The order of Nature, the strict adherence to law, the obedience to times and seasons, is another feature for profitable study. It is hinted at in the following lines of Thomson:—

"In the mingled wilderness of flowers,
Fair-handed Spring unblossoms every grace;
Throws out the snowdrop and the crocus first."

Each season has its appropriate flora, and though some flowers, like the daisy or the furze, seem to be equally at home in the frosty days of January or the sultry days of July, it will be found that these are marked exceptions to the general rule that assigns to each blossom its place in the floral calendar.

"Say, what impels, amidst surrounding snow,
Congealed, the crocus' flamy bud to grow;
Say, what retards, amidst the summer's blaze
The autumnal bulb[125] till pale declining days?
The God of seasons! whose pervading power
Controls the sun, or sheds the fleecy shower;
He bids each flower His quickening word obey,
Or to each lingering bloom enjoins delay."

White of Selborne.

"There is something," to quote Sir John Herschel, "in the contemplation of general laws which powerfully persuades us to merge individual feeling, and to commit ourselves unreservedly to their disposal; while the observations of the calm energetic

regularity of Nature, the immense scale of her operations, and the certainty with which her ends are attained, tend irresistibly to tranquillise and reassure the mind, and render it less accessible to repining, selfish, and turbulent emotions. And this it does, not by debasing our nature into weak compliances and abject submission to circumstances, but by filling us, as from an inward spring, with a sense of nobleness and power, which enables us to rise superior to them, by showing us our strength and innate dignity, and by calling upon us for the exercise of those powers and faculties by which we are susceptible of the comprehension of so much greatness."

"Mysterious round! what skill, what force divine,
Deep felt, in these appear! a simple train,
Yet so delightful mix'd, with such kind art,
Such beauty and beneficence combined;
Shade, unperceived, so softening into shade;
And all so forming one harmonious whole;
That, as they still succeed, they ravish still.
But wandering oft, with brute unconscious gaze,
Man marks not Thee, marks not the mighty hand
That, ever busy, wheels the silent spheres;
Works in the secret deep; shoots, steaming, thence
The fair profusion that o'erspreads the spring."

Thomson.

The following lines of Bishop Mant go very thoroughly into the subject:—

"How wonderful the laws assign'd
To all the vegetable kind!
By what mysterious pow'r imprest,
Does every plant that opes its breast
To gratulate the year's sweet prime,
And glad with fruit the autumnal time,
To bloom and ripe its season know,
And by fix'd laws of being grow?
Why, now that many a lingering flower
Awaits the later vernal hour,
Summer or autumn's warmer glow;
Do these their charms maturer show
To Spring's first wooing, nor forbear
The blasts and chilling frosts to dare?
While still the unbroken bands of sleep
The forest and the coppice keep
In torpid slumber; why do these,
Awaked before their brother trees,
Start forward on their annual race?
Whence is it, who the cause can trace,
Why from each known, appropriate root,
Or scatter'd seed is seen to shoot
The same unerring plant; the same
In stem, and stalk, and leaf, and frame

Of parts combined, and beauteous hue?
Why is the lowly speedwell blue?
The strawberry white? the nettle spread
With yellowish white and purplish red?[136]
What gives the pilewort's golden sheen?
The hellebores their blossoms green?[137]
One purple-tipp'd, the other still
Verdant throughout? The daffodil,
Why is it robed in yellow bright?
The violet, now in modest white,
Now in bright purple? Why do some
Breathe on the air a rich perfume,
Of joy and sweetness redolent;
While others yield a vapid scent,
Perchance distasteful? Why of size,
And shape, and native properties
Diversified? And why they dwell
Some here, some there? While these rebel
'Gainst change of site, why these display
A kind compliance? Who can say,
By what nice chemistry they breed
The germ, the seed-chest, and the seed?
Why that small crimson tuft should shoot
And form the hazel's kernel'd fruit?
And that green cup should give to view,
The scarlet berry of the yew?
Whence is it neither can produce,
Or tuft, or cup, its destined use,
Unless on each impregnate head
Their dust those bursting anthers shed?
Whence is it, wafted on the wind,
The dust, according to its kind,
Finds its appropriate place, decreed
To lodge and fructify the seed;
And with the appointed offspring swells
The pulpy cup or harden'd shells?
Howe'er the process we pursue,
And step by step with anxious view
Explore of each the guiding laws,
The scope, and end, and moving cause;
Though sage experience trace the course
Oft-times of secondary force;
Yet oft for each gradation fine,
And ever for the first design,
Of ignorance convict, we fall
Back on the primal Cause of all;
And rest on His creative will,
Who all His works with sovereign skill
Idea'd in His perfect mind;
And each, according to its kind,
Ordain'd amid the fertile field
To spring, to bloom, its fruit to yield,
And in itself its seed to bear;
And, as He order'd,[138] so they were."

Some of the questions propounded by Mant are of great interest, while all the points brought forward have a value that renders them well worthy of attentive study; the diversity of hues, the rich fragrance, the wonderful variation of form,[139] the attachment of certain plants to particular localities,[140] are but a few of the features that may be evolved from a very casual scrutiny of the natural forms herein referred to.

Shakspere, in dwelling on the blessings of a lowly station, says—

"Gives not the hawthorn bush a sweeter shade
To shepherds looking on their silly sheep,

Than doth a rich embroider'd canopy
To kings who fear their subjects' treachery ;"

while Hurdis, as naturally taking a floral example as the Bard of Avon draws his inspiration from humanity, cites the lowly lily of the vale as an illustration. We have already quoted a portion of the poem.

"When the blast
Her sister tribes confound, and to the earth
Stoops their high heads that vainly were exposed,
She feels it not, but flourishes anew,
Still shelter'd and secure. And as the storm
That makes the high elm crouch, and rends the oak,
The humble lily spares; a thousand blows
That shake the lofty monarch on his throne,
We lesser folks feel not. Keen are the pains
Advancement often brings. To be secure,
Be humble; to be happy, be content."

Plants are so usually employed as emblems of transience—man is so often compared to the fading leaf, the falling blossom, the withering grass, that examples to the contrary are few and far between; yet Barton dwells on the unchanging character of the ivy, and it is to him an emblem of permanence in the midst of evanescence.

"It changes not as seasons flow,
In changeless, silent course along;
Spring finds it verdant, leaves it so,
It outlives Summer's song.

"Autumn, no wan nor russet stain
Upon its fadeless glory flings;
And Winter o'er it sweeps in vain
With tempest on his wings."

The ivy is rather a favourite with Barton; in the following verses he dwells lovingly on the beauty with which it clothes decay, and gives a perennial charm to what would else be but a gaunt skeleton, a painful relic and remainder of departed vigour.

"Hast thou seen in Winter's stormiest sky
The trunk of a blighted oak,
Not dead, but sinking in slow decay,
Beneath Time's resistless stroke,
Round which a luxuriant ivy had grown,
And wreathed it with verdure no longer its own?

"Perchance thou hast seen this sight—and then,
As I at thy years might do,
Pass'd carelessly by, nor turn'd again
That scathèd wreck to view;
But now I can draw from that perishing tree,
Thoughts which are soothing and dear to me.

"Oh! smile not, nor think it a worthless thing,
If it be with instruction fraught;
That which will closest and longest cling,
Is alone worth a serious thought;
Should aught be unlovely which thus can shed
Grace o'er the dying, and leaves o'er the dead?"

Plants are far more often employed as emblems of the fleeting estate of man, and the transience of human life, than in perhaps any other connection. A few examples must, however, suffice; thus to Sir W. Jones the delicate fugitive flowers of the anemone are a fit symbol of the swiftly passing life of man—

"Youth, like a thin anemone, displays
His silken leaf, and in a morn decays."

The falling leaves of autumn, which have supplied moralists with an ever-ready theme and comparison, form the imagery of the following pensive lines of the poet Neale:—

"Traveller, as roaming over vales and steeps,
Thou hast, perchance, beheld in foliage fair
A willow bending o'er a brook—it weeps,
Leaf after leaf, into the stream, till bare
Are the best boughs, the loveliest and the brightest:
Oh! sigh, for well thou may'st, yet as thou sighest,
Think not 'tis o'er imaginary woe;
I tell thee, traveller, such is mortal man,

And as he hangs o'er fancied bliss, and so,
While life is verging to its shortest span,
Drop one by one his dearest joys away,
Till hope is but the ghost of something fair,
Till joy is mockery, till life is care,
Till he himself is unreflecting clay."

Another example of the same image, that will probably be familiar to most of our readers, occurs in the hymn of Bishop Horne, commencing—

"See the leaves around us falling,
Dry and wither'd to the ground—
Thus to thoughtless mortals calling,
In a sad and solemn sound."

The primrose, we have already seen in our second chapter, was by many of the poets accepted as an emblem of transience, though, as a matter of strict fact, its blossoms are at least as permanent as those of many other flowers, and far more so than those of the wood anemone, for example, its sister spring-flower; the delicacy and refinement of its form and colour probably suggested a feeling of fragility not altogether founded on fact. Milton speaks of the

"Soft silken primrose, fading timelessly."

Spenser introduces its blossoms again in the same sense in the passage—

"She is the rose, the glory of the day,
And mine the primrose in the lowly shade,
Mine, ah! not mine! amisse I mine did say.
O that so faire a floure so soone should fade,
And through untimely winter fade away."

Herrick, whose verses always bear the impress of the devout mind, and have a peculiarly quaint beauty of their own, furnishes our concluding illustration—

"Fair pledges of a fruitful tree,
Why do ye fade so fast?
Your date is not so past,

But you may stay yet here awhile,
To blush and gently smile,
And go at last.

"What, were ye born to be
An hour or half's delight,
And so to bid good-night?
'Twas pity Nature brought ye forth,
Merely to show your worth
And lose you quite.

"But you are lovely leaves, where we
May read, how soon things have
Their end, though ne'er so brave,
And after they have shewn their pride,
Like you, awhile, they glide
Into the grave."

The wealth of Nature, so freely scattered broadcast over the earth, a heritage of beauty open to all, is indicated in our next two extracts—

"Boon Nature scatter'd free and wild
Each plant and flower, the mountain's child.
Here eglantine perfumed the air,
Hawthorn and hazel mingled there;
The primrose pale and violet flower,
Found in each cleft a narrow bower;
Foxglove and nightshade, side by side,
Emblems of punishment and pride,
Group'd their dark hues with every stain
The weather-beaten crags retain."

Scott.

"Fresh herbs the fields, fair shrubs the banks adorn,
And snow-white bloom falls flaky from the thorn:
No fostering hand they need, no sheltering wall;
They spring uncultured, and they bloom for all."

Crabbe.

The grand lesson of charity, so hard to learn—the repaying good for evil, the heaping of the coals of fire, the prayer for those who have done nought but injury—is well taught in the lines of the poet Edmeston—

"When on the fragrant sandal tree
The woodman's axe descends,
And she who bloomed so beauteously
Beneath the keen stroke bends,
E'en on the edge that wrought her death,
Dying she breathes her sweetest breath,
As if betokening in her fall
Peace to her foes and love to all.
How hardly man this lesson learns,
To smile and bless the hand that spurns;
To see the blow, to feel the pain,
But render only love again.
This spirit not to earth is given;
One had it, but He came from Heaven,[141]
Reviled, rejected, and betray'd,
No curse He breathed, no plaint He made;
But when in death's deep pang He sighed,
Prayed for His murderers and died."

The admixture of evil with good in all earthly things, the kingdom that suffereth violence and that must be taken by force,[142] the crown of glory reached through the cross of pain and trial, are next dwelt on in the following passage from Spenser—

"Sweet is the rose, but grows upon a brere;
Sweet is the junipeere, but sharpe his bough;
Sweet is the eglantine, but pricketh nere;
Sweet is the fir-bloome, but his branches rough;
Sweet is the cypresse, but his rynd is tough;
Sweet is the nut, but bitter is his pill;
Sweet is the broome-floure, but yet soure enough;
And sweet is moly, but his root is ill.
So every sweet with soure is tempred still,
That maketh it be coveted the more:
For easie things, that may be got at will,
Most sorts of men doe set but little store,
Why then should I accompte of little paine,
That endlesse pleasure shall unto me gaine!"

Rest after labour, peace after warfare, joy after sorrow: recalling to our minds the glorious Apocalyptic visions that

irradiated the dungeon of the exile and prisoner of rocky Patmos. "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb; therefore are they before the throne of God and serve Him day and night in His temple, and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them." As we see the glowing myriads of the redeemed, and hearken to the mighty anthem of praise and adoration as it rises ever from that white-robed throng, our hearts swell at such a vision of spotless glory and purity, though our hearts cannot realise, our minds cannot grasp it in its beauty, its eternity, its intensity. Clogged by the cares and anxieties of our daily life, it is sweet to carry the thoughts forward in anticipation to the rest that remaineth. In the midst of the strife, the assurance of the coming peace that passeth all understanding is welcome indeed, while in the night of darkest sorrow some golden rays may be seen, forerunners of the coming day, the dawning of eternity.

Plants have ever been largely employed to point the lesson of an all-providing care, and of faith in Him who clothes the lowly flowers of the field in robes of a radiant beauty to which all human splendour, even of the monarch on his throne, fails in comparison.

"Say, with richer crimson glows
The kingly mantle than the rose?
Say, have kings more wholesome fare
Than we poor citizens of air?
Barns nor hoarded grain have we,
Yet we carol merrily;—
Mortal, flee from doubt and sorrow;
God provideth for the morrow."

Heber.

The inspired record, we need scarcely say, supplies numerous examples of this use of plants as illustrations of the tender mercy that is seen in all the dealings of Providence, and such texts as the following at once rise to our lips:—"Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body,

what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them; are ye not much better than they? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? for our heavenly Father knoweth ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee: for I am the Lord thy God."

All our readers will be familiar with the anecdote of the great African traveller, who, when almost giving way to despair, found amidst the desert sands a little blossom, and saw in it a proof that God's hand and care were present, beautifying the wilderness, and while sustaining the little weed, would no less sustain him in his hour of peril; hence, like Paul of old, he thanked God and took courage, for—

"God made the flowers to beautify
The earth, and cheer man's careful mood,
And he is happier who has power
To gather wisdom from a flower,


JAPONICA.
O radiant blossom! blushing rosy red
Beneath an April sky;
What flower from out our garden dare
With thy proud beauty vie?
Lovely thou art, a fitting gift methinks,
To grace some ladye fair;
To glow against her snowy throat
Or nestle in her hair.
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AGNES M HOWELL

And wake his heart in every hour,
To pleasant gratitude."

Wordsworth.

Browne, in his poem on the hawthorn tree, from which we have already quoted, after dwelling on the beauty of its white robe of blossom, thus concludes—

"Yet, for the bravery that she is in,
Doth neither handle card nor wheel to spin,
Nor changeth robes but twice; is never seen
In other colours than in white or green.
Learn then content, young shepherd, from this tree,
Whose greatest wealth is Nature's livery;
And richest ingots never toil to find,
Nor care for poverty, but of the mind."

There is much that is beautiful in feeling in the following lines of another old poet, Lyte—

"O spare my flower, my gentle flower,
The slender creature of a day!
Let it bloom out its little hour,
And pass away.

"Too soon its fleeting charms must lie
Decay'd, unnoticed, overthrown,
O, hasten not its destiny
So like mine own.

"The breeze will roam this way to-morrow,
And sigh to find his playmate gone:
The bee will come its sweets to borrow,
And meet with none.

"O, spare! and let it still outspread
Its beauties to the passing eye,
And look up from its lowly bed,
Upon the sky.

"O, spare my flower! Thou know'st not what
Thy undiscerning hand would tear:
A thousand charms thou notest not,
Lie treasured there.

"Not Solomon in all his state,
Was clad like Nature's simplest child,
Nor could the world combined, create
One floret wild.

"Spare then this humble monument
Of an Almighty's power and skill:
And let it at His shrine present
Its homage still.

"He made it who made nought in vain;[148]
He watches it who watches thee;
And He can best its date ordain
Who bade it be."

Flowers, like many other natural objects, have been largely employed by theologians and poets alike to demonstrate the power and goodness of God; thus Clare writes—

"Daisies, ye flowers of lowly birth,
Embroid'rers of the carpet earth,
That stud the velvet sod;
Open to Spring's refreshing air;
In sweetest, smiling bloom declare
Your maker and my God."

Dr. Goode, in like manner, uses the same flower for a similar end, the acknowledgment of the glory, the goodness, the immediate presence of God in nature.

"Not worlds on worlds, in phalanx deep,
Need we to prove a God is here;
The daisy, fresh from Nature's sleep,
Tells of His hand in lines as clear.

"For who but He who arch'd the skies,
And pours the day-spring's living flood,
Wondrous alike in all He tries,
Could raise the daisy's purple bud;

"Mould its green cup, its wiry stem,
Its fringèd border nicely spin,
And cut the gold-embossèd gem
That, set in silver, gleams within;

"And fling it unrestrain'd and free,
O'er hill and dale, and desert sod,
That man, where'er he walks, may see
In every step the stamp of God!"

The devout Milton, in the morning hymn that he ascribes to Adam in the felicity of Eden, makes similar acknowledgment of the Divine goodness as exemplified in His works.

"These are Thy glorious works, Parent of good,
Almighty! Thine this univeral frame,
Thus wondrous fair; Thyself how wondrous then!
Unspeakable; who sitt'st above these heavens,
To us invisible, or dimly seen
In these Thy lowest works; yet these declare
Thy goodness beyond doubt, and power divine."

The reason for all this wealth of natural beauty he assigns distinctly to be the pleasure of man, that man may thus look up from Nature to Nature's God, and find delight alike in the Creator and the creatures of His hand—

"Wherefore did Nature pour her bounties forth
With such a full and unwithdrawing hand,
Covering the earth with odours, fruits, and flocks,
But all to please and sate the curious taste."

"He prayeth best who loveth best,
All things both great and small;
For the dear God who loveth us
He made and loveth all."

Coleridge.

"Nature never did betray
The heart that loved her; 'tis her privilege,
Through all the years of this our life, to lead
From joy to joy; for she can so inform
The mind that is within us, so impress
With quickness and beauty, and so feed
With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues
Rash judgments, nor the sneer of selfish men,
Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all
The dreary intercourse of daily life

Shall e'er prevail against us, or disturb
Our cheerful faith, that all which we behold
Is full of blessings."

Wordsworth.

Nature thus studied is indeed its own exceeding great reward, since thus all things become links in that golden chain that binds us to the throne of God; the lowliest weed becomes a fellow-creature, and tells not obscurely of the universal Fatherhood, and we join with joyful hearts in the rhapsody of the sweet singer of Israel wherein he calls on all created things, terrestrial and celestial[144] alike, to unite with him in adoration of the Ruler of all. "Praise ye Him, all His angels; praise ye Him, all His hosts. Praise ye Him, sun and moon; praise Him, all ye stars of light. Praise Him, ye heavens of heavens, and ye waters that be above the heavens. Let them praise the name of the Lord; for He commanded and they were created. He hath also established them for ever and ever; He hath made a decree which shall not pass. Praise the Lord from the earth, ye dragons and all deeps. Fire and hail; snow and vapours; stormy wind fulfilling His word; mountains and all hills; fruitful trees and all cedars; beasts and all cattle; creeping things and flying fowl; kings of the earth, and all people; princes, and all judges of the earth; both young men and maidens; old men and children; let them praise the name of the Lord: for His name alone is excellent; His glory is above the earth and heavens."

NOTES.

THE following notes contain many matters that occurred to the thoughts of the writer as being illustrative of points brought forward in the body of the text, while it yet in many cases seemed undesirable to break the line of thought by diverging from the track into these minor things. They have, therefore, more conveniently, as we think, been thrown together at the end of our labours. Foot-notes, though at times a help, are often more a hindrance to the reader.

1. "Where the dark poppy flourish'd on the dry
And sterile soil, and mock'd the thin-set rye."

Crabbe.

"Poppies nodding mock the hope of toil."

Crabbe.

2. The study of what is botanically known as the vernation or præfoliation of the unexpanded leaves in the bud possesses very considerable interest. The leaves are not crumpled up into a mere ball without plan or system, but are all arranged in perfect order. In some buds, as those of the sycamore or horse chestnut, the leaves are placed in a plicate arrangement, the folds radiating from the base of each leaf in a fan-like form. In others the leaves are convolute, rolled round each other in a spiral curve, while in others again the leaves are imbricated, wrapping in regular series over each other like the tiles of a roof. Many other modifications of form are recog-

nised, though it would here seem somewhat out of place to dwell at any length upon them, nor could we well do so without the aid of illustrations.

3. "For in Him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also His offspring."—*Acts* xvii. 28.

4. Compare also Coleridge—"Poetry has been to me an exceeding great reward. It has soothed my affliction; it has multiplied and refined my enjoyments; it has endeared my solitude; and it has given me the habit of wishing to discover the good and the beautiful in all that meets and surrounds me."

5. A feeling well expressed by Clare in the following lines—

"And where the marjoram once, and sage and rue,
And balm and mint, with curled-leaf parsley grew,
And double marigolds, and silver thyme,
And pumpkins 'neath the window used to climb;
And where I often, when a child, for hours,
Tried through the pales to get the tempting flowers;
As lady's-laces, everlasting peas,
True-love-lies-bleeding, with the hearts at ease;
And golden rods and tansy running high,
That o'er the pale tops smiled on passers-by;
Flowers in my time which every one would praise,
Though thrown like weeds from gardens now-a-days."

These lines appear to us also tender with a feeling of regret for those days of the past that can never now return, a little of that natural feeling which prompts the old to say, "the former days were better than these;" a chord delicately touched too by Buchanan—

"Little white cottages all in a row,
Gardens where bachelor's-buttons grow,
Swallows' nests in roof and wall;
And up above the still blue sky,
Where the woolly white clouds go sailing by—
I seem to be able to see it all."

Or again, in Oliver Goldsmith's "Deserted Village"—

"How often have I loiter'd o'er thy green,
Where humble happiness endear'd each scene;
How often have I paused on every charm,
The shelter'd cot, the cultivated farm,
The never-failing brook, the busy mill,
The decent church that topt the neighbouring hill,
The hawthorn bush, with seats beneath the shade,
For talking age and whispering lovers made."

In Kirke White's "Childhood," again—

"Pictured in memory's mellowing glass, how sweet
Our infant days, our infant joys to greet;
To roam in fancy in each cherished scene,
The village churchyard and the village green.
The woodland walk remote, the greenwood glade,
The mossy seat beneath the hawthorn's shade,
The white-washed cottage, where the woodbine grew,
And all the favourite haunts our childhood knew!"

A feeling still more explicitly dwelt upon by Wordsworth in his "Intimations of Immortality," gathered from the recollections of early childhood.

6. The white water-lily, the *Nymphæa alba* of botanists, is the plant here referred to. It derives its name from the Greek, and refers to the old classic belief that Nymphs or Naiads were wont to inhabit quiet streams. In such localities, this, one of the most beautiful of the plants that compose our flora, delights to dwell, though it is by no means so common as its near relative, the yellow water-lily. The famous lotus-flower of the ancient Egyptians is an allied species, and the order to which it belongs likewise contains many fine tropical species—white, pale yellow, crimson, and blue, and amongst these the famous *Victoria regia* of the Berbice and the Amazon rivers: few, however, of these excel in beauty the silver chalice of our own white lily.

7. Compare a somewhat similar idea in the "Paradise and the Peri" of Moore—

"Those virgin lilies, all the night
Bathing their beauties in the lake,
That they may rise more fresh and bright,
When their beloved sun's awake."

And the following in Sir Walter Scott's description of Loch Katrine—

"The water-lily to the light
Her chalice rear'd of silver bright."

8. The genus *Hieracium* contains twenty-nine species; all these are known familiarly as hawk-weeds, from an old fable that birds of prey were in the habit of using these plants to strengthen their powers of vision. This old belief is also embalmed in the scientific term, *Hieracium* being derived from the Greek word signifying hawk. All the species have bright yellow flowers, and from the composite character of the flower-head and the forms of the leaves they are not altogether unlike the better known dandelion.

the radiate flowers and plumy seed referred to in the text being further points of resemblance.

9. The yellow goat's-beard, the *Tragopogon pratense* of botanical nomenclature, belongs, like the hawk-weeds referred to above, to the composite family. The generic title, *Tragopogon*, is compounded of two Greek words, and is identical in significance with the ordinary English name, Goat's-beard, a name suggested by the fluffy character of the head of fruit that succeeds the flowers. The flowers close at noon, hence the plant has received the rustic name of "Jack-go-to-bed-at-noon."

> "The goat's-beard, which each morn abroad does peep,
> But shuts its flowers at noon, and goes to sleep."
>
> *Cowley.*

10. The plant here referred to is the Star of Bethlehem, or *Ornithogalum umbellatum*, a bulbous-rooted plant, and a near ally of the onion; its brilliant white flowers have the curious property of only expanding in the sunshine.

11. *Arenaria*, from the Latin *arena*, sand, a genus containing several species of small plants known as sandworts; the reference in the text is somewhat too vague to enable us to say decisively what species is here specially intended.

12. *Cichorium Intybus*, the succory or chicory. Flowers delicately-pale blue, in form not unlike a hawk-weed. Not uncommon in some parts of England, and extending throughout all those parts of Europe and Asia that are bounded by the Arctic and tropical regions. Its roots supply the chicory of commerce, and are largely imported into England for that purpose. It is largely grown as a field crop in many parts of the continent. *Cichorium*, its generic name, is derived from the Arabic name of the plant, *chikouryeh;* while its familiar English name, chicory, is an evident corruption of the scientific term. A striking similarity is seen in the names by which it is known throughout Europe, it being in France, *chicorée;* Italy, *cicorea;* Portugal, *chicoria;* Spain, *achicoria;* Germany, *chicorie;* Denmark, *cicorie;* Sweden, *cikorie;* Holland, *cichorei;* and Russia, *tsikorei.*

13. The daisy, *Bellis perennis*, is the plant here referred to, the part marked as a quotation being taken from Burns' poem to a mountain daisy, commencing—

> "Wee, modest, crimson-tippèd flow'r,
> Thou's met me in an evil hour;

For I maun crush amang the stoure
Thy slender stem:
To spare thee now is past my pow'r,
Thou bonny gem."

14. *Silene noctiflora.* Flowers a very pale pink or nearly white, opening at night, sweet-scented. Commonly called the night-flowering catch-fly, many of the species of the genus to which it belongs exuding a viscid moisture from their stems.

15. "Then comes the tulip race, where beauty plays
Her idle freaks."

Thomson.

16. The sweet basil, a foreign plant naturalised in our gardens, is the plant here referred to. A labiate plant belonging to the same family as the wild basil, the ground ivy, sage, thyme, and mint, and, like them, possessed of an aromatic scent. In the Middle Ages it was largely employed, though the old saying, "Doctors differ," received herein a marked confirmation. On consulting an old author on the point, we find that "this is the herb which all authors are together by the ears about, and rail at one another like lawyers; Galen and Dioscorides hold it not fitting to be taken inwardly, and Chrysippus rails at it with downright Billingsgate rhetoric; Pliny and the Arabian physicians defend it. Away to Dr. Reason went I, who told me it was an herb of Mars, and under the Scorpion, and therefore called *Basillicon*, and it is no marvel if it carry a kind of virulent quality with it. Being applied to the place bitten by venomous beasts or stung by a wasp or hornet, it speedily draws the poison to it—*Every like draws its like.* Mizaldus affirms, that being laid to rot in horse-dung, it will breed venomous beasts. Hilarius, a French physician, affirms upon his own knowledge that an acquaintance of his, by common smelling to it, had a scorpion bred in his brain. Something is the matter; this herb and rue will never grow together, no, nor near one another; and we know rue is as great an enemy to poison as any that grows. I dare write no more of it."

17. Balm, a naturalised foreign plant—a labiate. "It causeth the mind and heart to become merry, and driveth away all troublesome thoughts and cares out of the mind, arising from melancholy and black choler. The leaves steeped in wine, and the wine drank, and the leaves outwardly applied, is a remedy against the sting of a scorpion and the biting of mad dogs; it is good for them that cannot fetch their breath, and a little bruised

and boiled in a little white wine and oil, and laid warm on a bile, will ripen and break it."

18. By many old writers, the *Nepeta Glechoma*, or ground-ivy, is called gill-go-by-ground from its long trailing stems. Like many other plants, it was at one time considered a remedy for the bite of a scorpion, a belief embalmed in its botanical name, that being derived from *Nepa*, a scorpion.

19. Euphrasy is here contracted from *Euphrasia*, the botanical name of the plant, more ordinarily known as the eyebright. The botanical name, Greek in its origin, means joy, and alludes to those valuable properties that the plant was at one time held to possess. The familiar name, eyebright, points to its use, as indicated in the text, as a means of strengthening the sight, and Milton, amongst other poets, thus refers to its use—

> "Then purged with euphrasie and rue
> His visual orbs, for he had much to see."

Other characteristic passages will be found in Spenser and Cowley. "It is under the sign of the Lion, and Sol claims dominion over it. If the herb was but as much used as it is neglected, it would half spoil the spectacle-maker's trade; and a man would think that reason should teach people to prefer the preservation of their natural, before artificial spectacles, which, that they may be instructed how to do, take the virtues of eyebright as followeth:—The juice or distilled water taken inwardly in white wine or broth, or dropped into the eyes for divers days together, helpeth all infirmities of the eye. The powder of the dried herb mixed with sugar, a little mace and fennel seed, and drank, or eaten in broth, hath the same wonderful power to help and restore the sight decayed through age. It hath restored sight to them that have been blind a long time before." The increased efficacy resulting from the addition of fennel was a notion dating from as early as Pliny, who taught his disciples that serpents eat the plant to sharpen their sight, and in an early English herbal we find the same idea—

> "The neddere (adder) whaune hurt in eye,
> He schall it chow wonderly,
> And leyn it to hys eye kindlely,
> Ye jows shall sawg and hely ye eye
> Yat beforn was sicke et feye."

Longfellow, in one of his poems, as our readers will doubtless remember, dwells on this ancient belief of the value of the fennel—

"Above the lowly plants it towers,
The fennel with its yellow flowers;
And in an earlier age than ours
Was gifted with the wondrous powers
Lost vision to restore."

20. The *Plantago major* of botanists. Mucilaginous and astringent. At one time much used as a remedy for wounds.

"*Romeo.* Your plantain-leaf is excellent for that.
Benvolio. For what, I pray thee?
Romeo. For your broken shin."
Romeo and Juliet, Act 1, scene 2.

21. Marj'ram, a contraction for herb marjoram. A naturalised plant, closely allied to our British species. Though often found in gardens, and at times an outcast, it has no claim to be considered indigenous, its home being the shores of the Mediterranean. Botanical name, *Origanum Onites.* The wild marjoram is largely used in distillation; it yields a strong and powerfully aromatic oil, known commercially as the oil of thyme.

22. As being from its straightness and length well adapted for the masts of ships.

23. In Italy the elm is largely employed as a support for the grape-vines. The height of the tree is, for this purpose, limited to fourteen or fifteen feet, and only as many of the lateral branches are allowed to grow as will suffice for the training of the vine. This use of the tree is very ancient. The classic poets, and more especially Virgil, frequently refer to the custom.

24. The poplar, from the lowness of the situations in which it seems best to thrive, and from the rapidity of its growth, has softer and more spongy wood than many other trees, though the timber of the various species is employed for making bowls, platters, and such-like things. The white poplar may be readily known by the extreme whiteness of the under-surface of the leaf.

"The poplar, that with silver lines his leaf."
Cowper.

The aspen, or trembling poplar, has the peculiar tremulous motion which is characteristic of the leaves of all the poplars, developed to a marked degree, the least wind sufficing to set the whole mass of foliage rustling, and the tree is therefore selected by Thomson to best convey the sense of the hush that not unfrequently precedes the gathering storm—

"Gradual sinks the breeze
Into a perfect calm; that not a breath
Is heard to quiver through the closing woods,
Or rustling turn the many twinkling leaves
Of aspen tall;"

while Spenser uses it as an image of fear and guilt in the following lines—

"His hand did quake
And tremble like a leaf of aspen green."

Scott, again, introduces it as an emblem of fickleness—

"O woman, in our hours of ease,
Uncertain, coy, and hard to please,
And variable as the shade,
By the light quivering aspen made;
When pain or sickness rends the brow,
A ministering angel thou."

In some parts of the country the aspen is traditionally supposed to have furnished the Cross of Calvary, and that thenceforward, as long as the world should last, it should know no rest nor peace.

The Lombardy poplar, so entirely distinct in appearance from all our other trees, must be so familiar to all our readers that no description can be needed. "One beauty," says Gilpin, "the Italian poplar possesses, which is almost peculiar to itself, and that is, the waving line it forms when agitated by wind; most trees in this circumstance are partially agitated, one side is at rest while the other is in motion; but the Italian poplar waves in one simple sweep, from the top to the bottom, like an ostrich feather." Leigh Hunt has used the same simile—

"The poplar's shoot,
Which, like a feather, waves from head to foot."

25. An evergreen tree, frequently planted in cemeteries, and generally accepted as an emblem of bereavement and woe.

"When villagers my shroud bestrew
With pansies, rosemary, and rue—
Then, lady, weave a wreath for me,
And weave it of the cypress-tree."

Scott.

"Nor cypress nor yew let us see;
For why should we mourn for the blest."

Byron.

Stanley, A.D., 1551, writes—

"Yet strew
Upon my dismall grave
Such offerings as you have,

Forsaken cypresse and sad yewe ;
For kinder flowers can take no birth
Or growth from such unhappy earth."

"Instead of girlond wear sad cypress now."
Spenser.

"Round my brow resigned, thy peaceful cypress twine."
Kirke White.

26. The willow, an emblem of grief, adopted in the first place possibly from the pathetic lament of the Israelites in the Babylonian captivity. "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion ; we hanged our harps upon the willows."

"A willow garland thou didst send
Perfumed, last day to me,
Which did but only this portend,
I was forsook by thee."
Herrick.

27. The yew supplied the best wood for bows, and furnished the English archers with the weapons that mainly won Crecy, Poictiers, and Agincourt.

28. The wood of the sallow being much less liable to split upon any sudden strain than many other woods, is at times employed in boat-building, mill-work, and such other uses as this peculiar property renders it more especially adapted to.

29. We are quite unable to throw any light upon the reason why such an epithet was selected.

30. The timber of the ash is of great value for its elasticity and great toughness, qualities that cause it to rank next to the oak in general usefulness. Evelyn says of it, "It serves the soldier, the carpenter, the wheelwright, cartwright, cooper, turner, and thatcher. Nothing like it for our garden palisade, hedges, hop-yard, poles, and spars, &c.; in sum, the husbandman cannot be without the ash for his carts, ladders, and other tackling; from the pike, spear, and bow, to the plough ; in peace and war it is a wood in the highest request."

31. The plane tree, *Platanus orientalis*.

32. From the extreme hardness and toughness of the wood, the holly is employed in carving, inlaying, making the blocks for calico or paper printing, and other such purposes.

33. A scarcely justifiable reproach, as when the wood is sufficiently well grown to be large enough for use it is much sought after, being of close texture and capable of receiving high polish.

34. We are unable to say distinctly what some of the plants here enumerated may be, since several of the names are of only local currency. The corn-flag, *gladiolus communis*, is very freely met with in the meadows, woods, and grassy heaths of southern Europe, but has no claim to be considered a member of our own flora. The tulip, a very common flower in the pastures of central and southern Europe, is occasionally found in England. The blossoms are of a brilliant yellow, and very fragrant. Botanical name, *Tulipa sylvestris*. The garden tulips are most of them varieties of an allied species, the *T. gesneria*. The name is a corruption of the Persian *Tolibun*, a turban, whose gay colours the rich tints of the tulip in some degree resemble. The Adonis-flower, or pheasant's-eye, the *Adonis autumnalis* of scientific nomenclature, is one of the most beautiful of the many beautiful plants that, like the corn-flower of cerulœan blue, the corn chrysanthemum of brilliant yellow, or the poppy of intense scarlet, adorn the fields of ripening corn. The Adonis-flower has its petals of a deep crimson, the name being suggested from the idea of the blossoms being stained by the blood of Adonis, the youth beloved by Venus, and at his death changed into a flower,

> "When the blood was shed,
> A flower began to rear its purple head."
>
> *Ovid.*
>
> "In his blood, that on the ground lay spill'd,
> A purple flower sprang up."
>
> *Shakspere.*

A plant, therefore, of special appropriateness under the circumstances of the text. The ox-eye, *Chrysanthemum Leucanthemum*, is a very common plant in pasture land. Its generic name is derived from *chrisos*, golden, and *anthos*, a flower, while the specific name means white flower, an apparent contradiction of terms. The ox-eye is, however, closely related to the still more familiar daisy, and has, like that, a central golden boss, surrounded by rays of snowy whiteness. By classic writers ox-eye is an epithet often applied to Hera or Juno, from the size and lustrous splendour of her orbs of vision, and it may very probably have been on this account that the present plant figures amongst the representative plants of Ben Johnson, though, as it is also largely connected in the Middle Ages with the idea of devotion, being dedicated both to St. John and to the Virgin Mary, this fact

supplies an alternate and equally appropriate reason for its introduction. Goldy-locks is an old name for what is now more commonly called the wood crowfoot, or *Ranunculus auricomus*, one of the numerous species of buttercups. Columbine, culvert-wort, or *Aquilegia vulgaris*, a graceful plant, having richly-cut leaves and purple flowers of rather peculiar form; ordinarily found in coppices, hedge-rows, and woods. The petals terminate at the base in a long spur, that, curling over at the end, is not unlike a little bird, hence Columbine from *Columba*, a dove; Culvert-wort, from the Anglo-Saxon *culfre*, a pigeon, and *wort*, a plant; and *Aquilegia*, from the Latin *Aquila*, an eagle. Goulan, or as in other provincial dialects it is sometimes rendered, gowan or gowles, means literally golden. We are unable to say definitely what plant is here intended, as at times in old writers the common daisy is thus called, while the ox-eye and May-weed are often called horse-gowans; the globe-flower is called locken gowlan, the locked-up-gold-flower, from the way the petals all close over; the marsh marigold is in some dialects the water-gowlan, while the corn marigold is known as the goldins or gowles. The king-cup is the marsh marigold, its golden cup and large size giving it its regal title. The sops-in-wine is no doubt the clove gilliflower, used to give a flavour to ale and wine, and mentioned by Chaucer as the top-in-wine. The harebell, or *Campanula rotundifolia*, is a well-known and graceful little plant, its graceful little bells being familiar to all those who have ever noticed the flora of our heaths and commons during the summer and autumn. Paigle is another word for what is more ordinarily known as the

"Cowslips wan, that hang the pensive head"

(Milton)

from a belief in olden time that the plant was efficacious in paralytic affections, hence palsy-wort, gradually corrupted into Paigle, or in mediæval Latin, *Herba paralysis*. The derivation of the word is, however, at best but obscure. Ben Jonson, in another of his poems, says—

'Strew, strew the glad and smiling ground,
With every flower, yet not unfound
The primrose drop—the Spring's own spouse,
Bright day's-eyes, and the lips of cows."

Other writers, however, derived it from *prata*, meadows, those being the favourite localities of growth; or the Anglo-Saxon *Beah*, a garland, and *gelde*, golden, from its terminal cluster of yellow blossoms. It is one of the plants of economic value to the rural housewife, a kind of wine being made from its blossoms.

"Whose simple sweets with curious skill,
The frugal cottage-dames distil,
Nor envy France the vine;
While many a festal cup they fill
With Britain's homely wine."

Montgomery.

The calaminth or basil thyme is the *Calamintha Acinos* of botanical science; a small plant having pale purple labiate blossoms, found on waste land. Fragrant, aromatic. Its name is derived from two Greek words, signifying good and mint, the plant being something like the mint, and having in the Middle Ages at least the reputation of being able, by means of its scent, to drive away all noxious creatures, the serpents, scorpions, and such-like that appear to have had so terrifying an effect on the minds of our forefathers in mediæval days. The flower-gentle, a species of *amaranthus*, better known in these days as love-lies-bleeding, is a not uncommon garden flower, its long crimson pendulous heads of flowers rendering it a favourite. Other old names for it are the flower-velure, velvet-flower, and floramor. The "fair-hair'd" hyacinth is so called by the poet from the old myth of a comely fair-haired youth, Hyacinthus, who, dearly beloved by Apollo, was accidentally killed by him, and then turned by the power of the god to the flower that yet bears his name. The fleur-de-luces is another name for the iris, a genus of which we have in England several species, either in common cultivation or indigenous to the soil.

35. Lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land."—*Song of Solomon.*

36. "And then at home the joyous scene!
The Maypole on the village green,
With ribbons, flag, and chaplets bound;
And pipe and tabor's mirthful sound;
And merry bells in concert ringing;
And merry voices blithely singing;
And merry footsteps featly glancing
With jingling bells; and morris-dancing,
'Midst clash of swords, and kendal green,
About the season's maiden Queen."

Mant.

37. "As harvest-time is a brighter time than seed-time, so is age brighter

than youth; that is, if youth were a seed-time for good. As ripe fruit is sweeter than green fruit, so is age sweeter than youth; provided the youth were grafted into Christ. As the completion of a work is more glorious than the beginning, so is age more glorious than youth; that is, if the foundation of the work of God were laid in youth."—*Pulsford's Quiet Hours.*

38. "The profit of the earth is for all: the king himself is served by the field."—*Ecclesiastes* v. 9.

> "Thy bounty shines in autumn unconfined,
> And spreads a common feast for all that lives."
>
> *Thomson.*

39. "And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not make clean riddance of the corners of thy field when thou reapest, neither shalt thou gather any gleaning of thy harvest: thou shalt leave them unto the poor, and to the stranger: I am the Lord your God."—*Leviticus* xxiii. 22.

> "The gleaners spread around, and here and there,
> Spike after spike, their scanty harvest pick.
> Be not too narrow, husbandman! but fling
> From the full sheaf, with charitable stealth,
> The liberal handful. Think, oh, grateful think
> How good the God of harvest is to you!
> Who pours abundance o'er your flowing fields;
> While these unhappy partners of your kind
> Wide-hover round you, like the fowls of heaven,
> And ask their humble dole."
>
> *Thomson.*

40. It is curious that these three national calamities should be similar to those impending over Israel after the numbering of the people by David. We read, "Go and tell David, Thus saith the Lord, I offer thee three things: choose thee one of them, that I may do it unto thee. Choose thee either three years' famine; or three months to be destroyed before thy foes, while that the sword of thine enemies overtaketh thee; or else three days the sword of the Lord, even the pestilence, in the land, and the angel of the Lord destroying throughout all the coasts of Israel. Now therefore advise thyself what word I shall bring again to Him that sent me."—1 *Chron.* xxi. 10–12.

41. "Come follow, follow me,
You fairie elves that be:
And circle round this greene,
Come follow me, your queen,

Hand and hand let's dance around,
For this place is fairie ground,
Over the tender grasse
So lightly we can passe,
The young and tender stalke
Ne'er bowes whereon we walke,
Nor in the morning dew is seen
Over-night where we have beene."

42. "In many parishes of Scotland there was suffered to exist a certain portion of land, called the *gudeman's croft*, which was never ploughed nor cultivated, but suffered to remain waste, like the Temenos of a pagan temple. Though it was not expressly avowed, no one doubted that the gudeman's croft was set apart for some evil being; that, in fact, it was the portion of the arch-fiend himself, whom our ancestors distinguished by a name which, while it was generally understood, could not, it was supposed, be offensive to the stern inhabitant of the regions of despair. This was so general a custom, that the Church published an ordinance against it as an impious and blasphemous usage."—Sir Walter Scott: *Demonology and Witchcraft.*

43. Numerous statutes were enacted to ensure a proper supply of yew wood, as its toughness and elasticity made it specially meet for the purpose, and the home supply being insufficient, it was necessary to import large quantities of it from abroad. It has been supposed that the general custom of planting these trees in the churchyards sprang from the necessity that thus arose, but it is more probable that the origin of this custom dates considerably before the days of Cressy and Agincourt, as the Celtic priesthood looked upon the tree as a symbol of immortality, and planted it in their sacred groves, and on the sites of many of the old heathen temples many of the early Christian churches were of set purpose erected as a more distinct token, probably, of the supplanting of the old creed by the new.

44. From the "Maid's Tragedy," by Beaumont and Fletcher.

45. "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, The fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the feast of tabernacles for seven days unto the Lord. On the first day shall be an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work therein. Seven days ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the Lord: on the eighth day shall be an holy convocation unto you; and ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the

Lord: it is a solemn assembly; and ye shall do no servile work therein. These are the feasts of the Lord, which ye shall proclaim to be holy convocations, to offer an offering made by fire unto the Lord, a burnt offering, and a meat offering, a sacrifice, and drink offerings, every thing upon his day: beside the sabbaths of the Lord, and beside your gifts, and beside all your vows, and beside all your freewill offerings, which ye give unto the Lord. Also in the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when ye have gathered in the fruit of the land, ye shall keep a feast unto the Lord seven days: on the first day shall be a sabbath, and on the eighth day shall be a sabbath. And ye shall take you on the first day the boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and the boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook; and ye shall rejoice before the Lord your God seven days. And ye shall keep it a feast unto the Lord seven days in the year. It shall be a statute for ever."—*Leviticus* xxiii. 33, *et seq.*

Other interesting references to this feast will be found in Numbers xxix. 35 and Nehemiah viii. 15.

46. Candlemas day falls on the 2nd of February. It has been held as a feast since the Anglo-Saxon period, and derives its name from being celebrated with many candles, in allusion to that passage that speaks of Christ as "a Light to lighten the Gentiles." At the Reformation it was struck out of the list of feasts to be observed by the Protestant Church, though it is still one of the recognised half-yearly terms in Scotland. According to old belief—

> "If Candlemas day be fair and bright,
> Winter will have another flight;
> But if Candlemas day be clouds and rain,
> Winter is gone, and will not come again."

Both in the Anglican and Roman branches of the Church the day is observed in commemoration of the presentation of Christ in the Temple, and the purification, according to the Levitical law, of His virgin mother.

47. As for instance in the following passages—

> "Hear us, great Pan."
> *Keats.*
>
> "Might I of Jove's nectar sup."
> *Ben Jonson.*
>
> "Where she like Venus doth appear."
> *Drayton.*
>
> "I might see young Cupid's fiery shaft."
> *Shakspere.*
>
> "Black Lethe shall oblivion leave."
> *Carew.*

"With wide Cerberian mouths full loud."
Milton.

"The hunter's call, to Faun and Dryad known."
Collins.

"Ceres' golden reign."
Gray.

"Whereon the wood-nymphs lay."
Southey.

"The Naiad-like lily of the vale."
Shelley.

48. Sir Thomas Overbury, describing "the faire and happy milkmaid," observes, "Thus lives she, and all her care is, that she may die in the spring-time, to have store of flowers stucke upon her winding-sheet."

49. "We adorn their graves," says Evelyn, in his *Sylva*, "with flowers and redolent plants, just emblems of the life of man, which has been compared in Holy Scriptures to those fading beauties, whose roots being buried in dishonour, rise again in glory."

50. "The maidens yearly planted and decked the graves of their defunct sweethearts with rose-bushes."—*Evelyn.*

"Here is also a certain custom, observed time out of mind, of planting rose-trees upon the graves, especially by the young men and maids who have lost their loves, so that this churchyard is now full of them."—*Camden.*

51. An allusion to the mission of the Parcæ or Fates—Clotho, Lachesis, and Atropos—in classic mythology.

52. "Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down."—*Job* xiv. 1, 2.

"As a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more."—*Ps.* ciii. 15, 16.

53. "My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle."—*Job* vii. 6.

54. "For he cometh in with vanity, and departeth in darkness, and his name shall be covered with darkness."—*Eccl.* vi. 4.

55. "As the cloud is consumed and vanisheth away; so he that goeth down to the grave shall come up no more."—*Job* vii. 9.

"We are but of yesterday and know nothing, because our days upon earth are a shadow."—*Job* viii. 9.

"My days are like a shadow that declineth."—*Ps.* cii. 11.

"Man is like to vanity: his days are as a shadow that passeth away."—*Ps* cxliv. 4.

"For who knoweth what is good for man in this life, all the days of his vain life which he spendeth as a shadow?"—*Eccl.* vi. 12.

56. "And the Lord God prepared a gourd, and made it to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief. So Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd. But God prepared a worm when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd that it withered."—*Jonah* iv. 6, 7.

57. "In the morning they are like grass which groweth up. In the morning it flourisheth, and groweth up; in the evening it is cut down, and withereth."—*Ps.* xc. 5, 6.

58. "We spend our years as a tale that is told."—*Ps.* xc. 9.

59. "Now my days are swifter than a post: they flee away, they see no good. They are passed away as the swift ships: as the eagle that hasteth to the prey."—*Job* ix. 25, 26.

60. "When a few years are come, then I shall go the way whence I shall not return."—*Job* xvi. 22.

61. In the Middle Ages it was held as an article of belief that the swan, mute at all other times, sang her own death-song, and died while its echoes were yet ringing around her; the singing of the swan was, therefore, the warning of approaching and speedy dissolution.

62. We have already, in another of our works, *The Principles of Ornamental Art*, gone at some length into the symbolic meanings of the various colours; it therefore seems unadvisable to go over the same ground again.

63. This receipt was found by Caius Pompeius in the Treasury of Mithridates, on his overthrow.

64. Though the rosemary is almost always associated with the idea of death, the connection is not a necessary one. Herb-remembrance need not exclusively remind us of what we have lost, hence the rosemary was at times used at weddings and other festivities. The old carol sung at the serving up of the boar's head on Christmas day in the Hall of Queen's College, Oxford, is an illustration of this use of the plant. It begins as follows—

"The boar's head in hand bear I,
Bedeck'd with bays and rosemary;
And I pray you, my masters, be merry.
Quot estis in convivio,
Caput apri defero,
Reddens laudes Domino.

"The boar's head as I understand,
Is the rarest dish in all this land,
Which thus bedeck'd with a gay garland
Let us servire cantico,
Caput apri defero,
Reddens laudes domino."

Scott refers to a similar custom—

"Then the grim boar's head frowned on high,
Crested with bays and rosemary."

65. Preshute Church, near Marlborough, Wiltshire, is the spot before our eyes as we write, though we are well aware that a like description in general particulars might equally be given of many hundred such peaceful spots throughout our land.

66. Bunhill Fields, London. The object of our pilgrimage was to visit the tomb of Bunyan, one of the immortal names that certainly stands in need of no eulogy of ours. England needs some Campo Santo as the resting-place of her distinguished sons, where petty differences of creed should be ignored in the greatness of the common brotherhood of glory. Such surroundings as those of the tomb of Bunyan jar upon the feelings; he needs in the Celestial City no offering of ours; but there must be many living who would be glad that even his mortal remains should receive a worthier treatment. It is hard to have to pay homage at his grave, as we had to do, stared out of countenance by a stolid baby, whose nurse, some few years older, had brought it hither as a quiet place to read a low and sensational penny journal, while the ground around the tomb was strewn with the heads and tails of shrimps, the remnants of the lunch of some one who had found in the cemetery a quiet corner out of the turmoil of the street, and on the railings of the tomb of Bunyan a convenient seat for the enjoyment of his repast.

67. Compare the passage in the "Allegro" of Milton, "Meadows trim with daisies pied." "Pied," in the old writers, means sharply marked in contrasting colour, like the black and white plumage of the magpie; thus Shakspere, in the "Tempest," used the word "pied-ninny," as being equiva-

lent to jester or fool, in allusion to the parti-coloured clothing worn by the professed jesters of the day. It would appear that Shakspere, in the passage given in our text, referred to the bright yellow of the boss of the daisy as contrasted with the silvery rays surrounding it.

"A silver shield with boss of gold."
Wordsworth.

While Milton, it would appear, refers to the parti-coloured effect produced by the verdant mead being sprinkled over with these daisies.

"Whose perfect white
Show'd like an April daisy on the grass."
Shakspere.

68. Probably the king-cup or marsh marigold, known botanically as the *Caltha palustris.* The name is, however, used rather vaguely, being applied to several plants that flower at the time of the arrival of the cuckoo. The germander speedwell, or *Vernica Chamædrys;* the stitchwort, or *Stellaria holostea;* and the ladies-smock, or *Cardamine pratensis,* are all called by this general name.

69. The leaf of the sycamore, *Acer pseudo-platanus,* bears a very considerable resemblance to those of both the oriental and western planes. The name of sycamore was given to this tree from a belief that it was identical with the sycamore of Scripture, which is, however, a kind of fig, and in no way related to the species under consideration. The leaves of the sycamore are interesting objects in the early spring, being beautifully delicate in texture, and varied in colour from crimson and amber to pale yellow-green, while the autumnal tints are no less charming, being very rich in colour, and (from the fact of the early change) cause the tree to be very conspicuous amongst the other foliage that surrounds it, and that has not yet been affected by the change of season—a fact that has not escaped the notice of one of our poets, Cowper, who well describes its changing aspect—

"The sycamore, capricious in attire,
Now green, now tawny, and, ere autumn yet
Has changed the woods, in scarlet honours bright."

The sycamore belongs to the same family as the Canadian maples, the trees that more especially, by the brilliancy of their foliage, give so great a glory to "the fall," or Canadian autumn.

70. Philomel, a name often given by the poets to the nightingale, or *Luscinia Philomela* of the ornithologist. Ovid relates that Philomela, daughter of Pandion, king of Athens, mourning for her children, was turned

into a nightingale; hence Virgil uses the word Philomela when speaking of the bird, and the mediæval and modern poets have continued the usage, and on this same account the song of the nightingale has by poetic fiction been deemed pensive and melancholy.

"Our mournful Philomel,
That rarest tuner."

Drayton.

"The nightingale's complaint."

Shelley.

As a matter of fact, though at times plaintive, it is the outpouring of the gladdened heart—the male bird being the songster—full of melody, the expression of its devotion to its mate. The sex of the vocalist renders Milton's address to the "Sweet songstress" ornithologically incorrect. In "Il Penseroso," he addresses the nightingale as that

"Sweet bird, that shunn'st the noise of folly,
Most musical, most melancholy!"

A sentiment, the latter part at least of which is warmly controverted by Coleridge as follows:—

"Hark! the nightingale begins its song,
'Most musical, most melancholy' bird!
A melancholy bird! Oh, idle thought!
In nature there is nothing melancholy
But some night-wandering man, whose heart was pierced
With the remembrance of a grievous wrong,
Or slow distemper, or neglected love
(And so, poor wretch! filled all things with himself,
And made all gentle sounds tell back the tale
Of his own sorrow); he, and such as he,
First named these notes a melancholy strain,
And many a poet echoes the conceit.

. . .

My friend, and thou, our sister! we have learnt
A different lore: we may not thus profane
Nature's sweet voices, always full of love
And joyance! 'Tis the merry nightingale
That crowds, and hurries, and precipitates
With fast thick warble, his delicious notes,
As he were fearful that an April night
Would be too short for him to utter forth
His love chant, and disburthen his full soul
Of all its music!"

Izaak Walton, always so fresh and quaint in utterance, echoes the general chorus of praise of the strains. "The nightingale, another of my

airy creatures, breathes such sweet, loud music out of her instrumental throat, that it might make mankind to think that miracles are not ceased. He that at midnight, when the very labourer sleeps secure, should hear, as I have very often, the clear airs, the sweet descents, the natural rising and falling, the doubling and redoubling of her voice, might well be lifted above earth, and say, 'Lord, what music hast Thou prepared for the saints in heaven, when Thou affordest bad men such music on earth!'" After this glowing description, the attempt of one of our naturalists to convey an idea of its song seems flat and tame:—"Tio, tio, tio, tio, tio, tio, tio, tix—Quitio, quitio, quitio, quitio—Zquo, zquo, zquo, zquo—Tzu, tzu, tzu, tzu, tzu, tzu, tzu, tzu, tzu, tzi—Quorror tiu zqua pipiquisi—Zozozozozozozozozozozozozo-zozozozo zirrhading—Tinu, tinu, tinu, tinu."

71. This love is shown both in his description of natural scenery, and in the frequent introduction of gardens in his poems. It will be remembered how Emelie, in the "Knight's Tale," rises at daybreak to descend into the garden—

"Iclothed was sche fressh for to devyse,
Hire heer was browdid in a tresse
Byhynde hire bak, a yerde long, I gesse;
And in the gardyn, at the sonne upriste,
Sche walketh up and down wheeras hire liste;
Sche gadereth floures, partye whyte and reede,
To make a certyn garland for hire heede,
And as an aungel hevenly sche song."

And in the "Frankellyne's Tale," the friends of the Lady Dorigen, seeking to rouse her from her melancholy, take her "by riveres and by welles," and to other pleasant localities—

"So on a day, right on the morwe tide,
Unto a gardyn that was ther beside,
In which that they had made her ordinance
Of vitaile and of other purveance,
They gon and plaie heer al the longe day,
And this was on the sixte morne of May,
Which May had painted with softe schoures,
This gardeyn ful of leves and of floures;
And crafte of mannes hand so curiously
Arrayed had this gardeyn of suche pris,
As if it were the verray paradis."

72. As referred to in the following passage, taken from the "Legende of Goode Women"—

"And as for me, though that I konne but lyte,
On bokes for to rede I me delyte,
And to hem give I feyth and ful credence,
And in myn herte have hem in reverence
So hertely that there is game noon
That fro my bokes maketh me to goon,
But yt he seldom on the holy day,
Save, certynly, when that the moneth of May
Is comen, and that I here the foules synge
And that the flowers gynnen for to sprynge."

He repeats the ideas of the last two lines of the foregoing extract in another passage—

"Herkeneth these blissful briddes how they synge,
And seth the freissche floures how they springe:
Ful is myn hert of revel and solaas."

73. The home of Wordsworth was at Rydal Mount, in the Lake District of Westmoreland.

74. It is also called the gowan, though it shares that name with one or two other flowers. Gowan is supposed by some to be derived from the Celtic *gwen*, fair: if this conjecture be correct, it is one more proof of the hold this little flower has taken on the affections; see, however, note 34, where another derivation of the word is given.

75. In moist meadow-land—

"Into the meadows where
Mint perfumes the gentle air,"

as sung by Brown—the king-cup or marsh marigold, the *Caltha palustris* of botanical nomenclature, is a very characteristic flower of the spring, and a very beautiful one. The lines of Gay rather underrate than over-estimate its charms—

"Fair is the king-cup that in meadow blows."

The word *caltha* is derived from the Greek *kalathos*, a cup, and is very expressive of the form of the flower.

"Here's a king-cup of gold brimming over with dew,
To be kissed by a lip just as fresh as its own."

76. The delicate turqoise blue and bright green leaves of the *Myosotis palustris*, or forget-me-not, growing at the pebbly margin of the stream, are here referred to.

77. In English, primrose; in French, *primevère;* in Italian, *primavera;* in German, *Fruhlings blume*—all having a similar signification, indicating its early appearance.

> "The primrose placing first, because that in the spring
> It is the first appears, then only flourishing."
>
> *Drayton, "Marriage of Tame and Isis."*

78. It is thus that the Poles designated their country "Our Motherland"—a term even more significant, more endearing, than the German "Fatherland."

79. Though it did not seem advisable to quote at too great a length from one author in the body of the text, the following lines of Clare are too good to be omitted—

> "Welcome, pale primrose, starting up between
> Dead matted leaves of oak and ash, that strew
> The every lawn, the wood and meadow through,
> 'Mid creeping moss and ivy's darker green.
> How much thy presence beautifies the ground!
> How sweet thy modest unaffected pride
> Glows on the sunny bank and wood's warm side!
> And where thy fairy flowers in groups are found,
> The schoolboy roams enchantedly along,
> Plucking the fairest with a rude delight;
> While the meek shepherd stays his simple song
> To gaze a moment on the pleasing sight.
> O'erjoyed to see the flowers that truly bring
> The welcome news of sweet returning spring."

80. The Latin equivalent for our English word "spring."

81. The pasque-flower has purple blossoms, externally of silky texture, and of very handsome character; it is found in dry chalky pastures. The other species of English anemones, besides the anemone mentioned in our text and ordinarily termed the windflower or wood anemone, are the rare yellow wood anemone and the blue mountain anemone. All four plants are well worthy the attention of the lover of plants.

82. "Careless of thy neighbourhood,
Thou dost show thy pleasant face
On the moor, and in the wood,
In the lane—there's not a place,
Howsoever mean it be,
But 'tis good enough for thee."

Wordsworth.

83. "Dic quibus in terris inscripti nomina regum nascuntur flores."

84. "This flower is but one, in which be three sundrye colours and yet but one sweet savour. So God is three distinct persons in one undivided Trinitye, united together in one eternal glory and divine majestie." The German name of the plant is the *Dreifaltigkeitsblume*, literally "threefoldenness flower." The French *Herbe de la Trinité* is the hepatica.

85. It is associated with the marigold as an emblem of sorrow, and cards having wreaths of these two flowers painted on them, and such mottoes as "May you ever escape them," "May they be far removed from thee," are presented to each other by friends as an offering and expression of kindly feeling. The French word for the marigold and for care and anxiety is the same, *souci*, and the plant is dedicated to the Virgin Mary, *Mater dolorosa*. It would, however, appear to have been originally but an undesigned corruption or else play upon words, its old name being soucicle, a word derived from the Latin *solis cyclus*, the circle of the sun, either on account of the brilliant yellow disc of the flower, not unlike the heraldic representation of the sun, or from the habit of the flowers of turning with the sun and towards the light—two theories for the origin of a name that would equally well suit the sunflower of our gardens, a flower that Gerarde, writing in 1596, calls the "Flower of the Sunne, or Marigolde of Peru." The English name when analysed means literally "the golden flower of Mary," and points to a time when the monks held sway both in religious thought and botanical nomenclature, and not unfrequently tried to combine the two.

86. A compliment to Queen Elizabeth, who was known to be highly gratified at such allusions.

87. Venus, the goddess of love and beauty, according to one of the classic myths, rose from the sea, and as she was said to have thus first risen near the island of Cytherea (now Cerigo), she was worshipped under the name of Cythere or Cythereia. Many other places, however, put in a like claim, influenced by the dictates of patriotism, and the desire to propitiate such a deity and to rest beneath her protection, and she thus became known also as Idalia, Paphia, Amathusia, and several other such-like titles.

88. Compare Keats—

"Fast fading violets covered up in leaves."

89. Or in Kirk White's "Childhood"—

"The mossy seat beneath the hawthorn's shade."

90. The poets almost invariably select the time of flowering as the typical season of the hawthorn; thus Keats, in his poem to the "Nightingale," writes as follows:—

"The grass, the thicket, and the fruit tree wild:
White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine."

Kirke White, in his ode to "Contemplation," in the same spirit writes—

"On the upland stile embowered
With fragrant hawthorn, snowy-flowered."

And in Bamfylde we find the lines—

"The green hedge and dewy grass unshorn,
With cowslips pale, and many a whitening thorn."

91. "And milk-white is the slae."—*Burns.* The sloe or blackthorn may perhaps be better known to many—who when young have

"Rambled in the field
To gather austere berries from the bush,
Or search the coppice for the clustering nuts"—

as the wild plum. The fruit, though boys (being boys) will eat it, has too intensely acid a flavour to be of much value, though the rustic housewife makes a preserve and wine from it, and the juice, it is stated, is also largely used in the adulteration of other wines that affect a higher standing than the sloe wine of the rural wine-cellar.

92. An old tree, probably a cutting or natural growth from the stock of the more famous Glastonbury thorn, still flourishes near the old Abbey, and produces two crops of blossoms each year—one at the usual time, the beginning or middle of May, and the other about Christmas. Though there is no other instance of so regular a recurrence of the flowering in mid-winter year after year, the circumstance does not altogether stand alone, as there are several trees in various parts of England that in a less marked degree show the same feature. The berries when sown produce common hawthorn, a plant that only flowers at the normal time. "As for the hawthorn tree at Glastonbury, which is said to flower yearly on Christmas day, it rathers shows the superstition of those that observe it for the time of its flowering than any great wonder, since the like may be found in divers other places of this land; as in Whey Street in Romney-marsh, and near

unto Nantwich in Cheshire, by a place called White-green, where it flowereth about Christmas and May. If the weather be frosty, it flowereth not until January, or until the hard weather be over."—*Culpepper's Herbal.*

93. In the district in which these remarks are penned the following have been the dates at which the hawthorn has, year after year for nine successive years, been first seen in flower:—1865, May 7; 1866, May 14; 1867, May 7; 1868, May 6; 1869, April 30; 1870, May 14; 1871, May 2; 1872, May 9; 1873, May 10. It will thus be seen that it would only once in those nine years have been sufficiently formed to aid the decorations of May-day; though, if we restore the eleven days of which the new style has deprived us, it will be noticed, on referring to our list, that for such old May-day the blossom would only twice in the nine years have failed to put in an appearance. The average date for that period is May 8, and the difference between the earliest and latest first appearance, during the time the records were kept, is fifteen days. These records were made by a local natural history society comprising many careful and enthusiastic members; they are not merely the observations of one individual, under whose eyes a comparatively small section of country only can fall.

94. The following extract from a magazine devoted to horticulture—*The Garden*—seemed to us, on reading it, so *apropos* to the subject, that we trust our readers will feel with us that we are fully justified in quoting it:—

"Gardeners usually love flowers purely and solely because of their beauty; artists love them (though in their inmost hearts they love trees far better) because they afford subjects in the imitation of which they have scope for their charming powers; the poets, the true and genuine poets, as distinguished from versifiers, rhymesters, and paper-stainers, love them, as the gardeners do, for the sake of their sweet complexion, but, at the same time, because of the pictures they supply to the mind. And this, perhaps, is the noblest purpose for which flowers were created. The gratification of the simple sense of seeing is a very inferior enjoyment compared with the delights of which the intellect is capable; and these last, in many of their richest forms, are derived from plants and flowers. The eye must needs be pleased in the first instance; it is the living instrument by means of which the mind talks with nature. The error, too common among mankind, is to rest content with what it says as to prettiness of forms and colours, and to enquire no further. It is quite a mistake to suppose that seeing a thing, or even owning a thing, is exhausting it; that we have done, for instance, with the rose, when we have learned its botanical structure, the conditions of its most excellent blooming, and the chances it may have of winning at some grand competitive flower-show. Such knowledge is very pleasant, very proper, useful, and creditable; but, if we go no further, we are only playing on the outside, and are like little children on the shore, who pick up the shells and crimson weeds left in the brown wrinkles of

the sand by the retiring water, unconscious of what is found by those who sail afar in ships. The poet teaches us how to see beyond the surface. Every man, therefore, who would get the full value out of his trees and flowers should try to cultivate a poetical spirit. Some few of our fellow-creatures are rich in this respect, just as some are rich in mechanical ingenuity, others in aptitude for mathematics, or for legislation, or some other valuable but not superior art; and these rich ones are the poets, properly and legitimately so called. Whether skilful or not in rhyme and metre does not matter; they are poets in the fact that they see farther than the other people do; they make common things glorious; they show us that the little and the unpretentious is no less worthy than the large and imposing; they let us into the inner life and the sweet and lovable meaning and purpose of trees and flowers.

"Shakspere, with whose plants and flowers I am about to deal, is pre-eminently the poet of nature; for that matter so is he pre-eminently the poet of the heart, no man ever having sounded the depths of the affections so thoroughly and so accurately as he has done. At present it is enough to consider him in his capacity of lover of the woods and fields; as the man who has made more frequent and more truthful mention of the elements of vegetable nature than any other whose writings the world possesses; and who, in matters of correct teaching, is far before many a learned lecturer or college graduate. That a gardener can do without him, of course, is quite true; so can he do without Linnæus and De Candolle. That he can dispense with that critical knowledge of his works, which is conventionally called 'understanding Shakspere,' I have no objection to concede. This, however, is a very different thing from dispensing with Shakspere as a tutor, which no intelligent gardener will ever do. In the little articles I propose to write on the flowers and plants of which he makes mention, I shall constantly regard him, accordingly, as the gardener's friend. If Shakspere be not the gardener's friend, depend upon it he is friend to no one else.

"On going through his plays, I find that of our English wild flowers Shakspere mentions about fifteen, alluding to some only once or twice, to others a dozen times. Of exotic flowers, or such as were cultivated in the scanty gardens of his period more than 300 years ago, he mentions nine or ten. Of trees and shrubs, exotics included, there are notices of about twenty-five. Of fruits, whether ripened in England, or imported from foreign countries, I find the names—sometimes often recurrent—of about thirty. Vegetables are spoken of in about equal proportion. Products of the nature of spice and medicines are mentioned to the extent of about a score; and the same is about the number of what are contemptuously called 'weeds.' The total is thus about 150, or very considerably higher—I think considerably more than double that of the total to be found in Milton—and considerably exceeding that of the plants mentioned by the next who is most copious in allusion to plants, the ancient Roman poet in whose 'Georgics' and 'Æneid' the references are so frequent and diversified. Shakspere, we must remember, did not set out with a view to talking of trees and plants. His designs were very different, and the allusions are only casual and incidental, a circumstance which renders the total of 150 truly remarkable. In reference to this total, we must remember again that three centuries ago botany had scarcely found its feet, and that few of our English wild flowers had been discriminated. Shakspere had no 'floras' to consult; it is doubtful if he could have found even a botanical teacher. The only books upon plants then in existence were the writings, in

Greek, of Theophrastus and Dioscorides, and, in Latin, of Pliny and Columella, with such 'herbals' and 'histories' as had been produced in his own age; those, for example, of Fuchsius and Wm. Bulleyn. Shakspere's library was nature; his vocabulary was little more than the vernacular; and glorious is the use he has made of these. It seems to me that we ought to be thankful that he lived in an age when science was not yet fledged; when there were neither Eschscholtzias nor Odontoglossums. Having only simple plants to deal with, he has shown us how all comes right to a master, that the cowslip is every bit as good an illustration, and comes charged with as much beauty as the proudest Lælia, or any other floral aristocrat that fetches ten guineas a root."

95. The sound is in this case more poetical than the sense, the word eglantine, in French *aiglanteire*, being derived from the French word *aiguille*, a needle, in reference to the sharp prickles borne by the plant.

96. Mallet is fond of the simile; we have marked two passages from two distinct poems as illustrative of this:—

"Her bloom was like the springing flower,
That sips the silver dew;
The rose was budded in her cheek,
Just opening to the view.
But love had, like the canker-worm,
Consumed her early prime;
The rose grew pale, and left her cheek—
She died before her time."

"His cheeks, where love with beauty glow'd,
A deadly pale o'ercast;
So fades the fresh rose in its prime,
Before the northern blast."

97. "Gather therefore the rose, whilst yet in prime,
For soon comes age, that will her pride deflower."

Spenser.

98. "Ah! see whose fayre thing dost fain to see,
In springing floure the image of the day!
Ah! see the virgin rose, how sweetly shee
Doth first peepe forth with bashful modestee,
That fairer seems the lesse ye see her may!
Lo! see soone after how, more bold and free,
Her barèd bosome she doth broad display:
Lo! see soone after how she fades and falls away!"

Spenser.

99. Parkinson, in his "*Paradisi in sole Paradisus terrestris;* or, a Garden of all sorts of Pleasant Flowers which our English Ayre will permit to

be noursed up," says, "We call them generally in English foxglove; but some (as thinking it to be too foolish a name) do call them finger-flowres, because they are like unto the fingers of a glove;" and in another of his works, the *Theatrum Botanicum*, he explains the Latin word to be suggested by "the hollow forme of the flowers, which are like finger-stalls." The ancient glove had only one division for the thumb and one for all the four fingers, like some hedge-cutters' gloves of the present day.

100. Camoens, the Portuguese poet, and author of the *Lusiad*, in one of his poems, says that the rose was chosen as the emblem of love because in the midst of its fragrance "tears its dewy leaves disclose," and that it blossoms in the midst of thorns; those, therefore, who will press it to their hearts must be content to gather and to wear it with the thorns no less than the blossoms, and even then the flowers will often wither though the thorns will remain as sharp as ever.

"I have seen
The thorn frown rudely all the winter long,
And after, bear the rose upon its top."
Dante.

101. The blossoms, though ordinarily a delicate lilac-pink, are subject to a considerable variation of character, like all the other parts of the plant, and may not unfrequently be found almost or perfectly white.

102. "Content with food which nature freely bred,
On wildings and on strawberries they fed;
Cornel and bramble-berries gave the rest,
And falling acorns crowned the frugal feast."

"Men fed with oaken mast,
The aged trees themselves in years surpass'd."

103. As in "Ye Mariners of England," written by Campbell:—

"Britannia needs no bulwarks,
No towers along the steep;
Her march is o'er the mountain wave,
Her home is on the deep.
With thunders from her native oak
She quells the floods below,
As they roar on the shore,
When the stormy winds do blow;
When the battle rages loud and long,
And the stormy winds do blow!"

104. "Thought cannot spend itself, comparing still
The great and little of thy lot, thy growth
From almost nullity into a state
Of matchless grandeur, and declension thence,
Slow, into such magnificent decay."

Cowper.

105. "Thou wast a bauble once, a cup and ball
Which babes might play with; and the thievish jay,
Seeking her food, with ease might have purloin'd
The auburn nut that held thee, swallowing down
Thy yet close-folded latitude of boughs
And all thine embryo vastness at a gulp.
But fate thy growth decreed; autumnal rains
Beneath thy parent tree mellow'd the soil,
Design'd thy cradle; and a skipping deer
With pointed hoof dibbling the glebe, prepared
The soft receptacle, in which, secure,
Thy rudiments should sleep the winter through."

Cowper.

106. "Time made thee what thou wast, king of the woods."

Cowper..

107. "Oh, could'st thou speak,
As in Dodona once thy kindred trees
Oracular, I would not curious ask
The future, best unknown, but at thy mouth,
Inquisitive, the less ambiguous past.
By thee I might correct, erroneous oft,
The clock of history, facts and events
Timing more punctual, unrecorded facts
Recovering, and misstated setting right—
Desperate attempt, till trees shall speak again!"

Cowper.

The Greeks held the belief that the oak was especially dear to Zeus or Jupiter, and that in the oaks of Dodona he revealed his will towards men, the rustling of the branches of these holy trees being auguries for the future. He is therefore sometimes called Dodonæos, and is then represented in the Greek sculptures as wearing a wreath of oak.

108. "Tityre, tu patulæ recubans sub tegmine fagi."

Virgil.

109. And again, a little farther on in the same comedy, we find the similar passage—"There is a man haunts the forest that abuses our young plants with carving Rosalind on their barks; hangs odes upon hawthorns, and elegies upon brambles; all, forsooth, deifying the name of Rosalind."

110. The columbine is rather a favourite plant with Spenser. In his "Garden of Beauty," from which the next extract in the body of our book is taken, after dwelling on the lips, the ruddy cheeks, and the eyes of the fair one, he goes on to compare

"Her neck like to a bunch of cullambines."

111. "We come now to the basiliske, whom all other serpents do flee from and are afraid of: albeit he killeth them with his very breath and smell that passeth from him; yea, and by report, if he doe but set his eye on a man it is enough to take away his life." As the only chance of knowing anything of so terrible a monster was to see without being seen, the imagination had full play when he had to be portrayed; he is ordinarily, however, represented as a flying serpent. In the "Woman Hater" of Beaumont and Fletcher we find the line—

"The basilisk's death-dealing eye;"

while in "King Henry VI.," 2nd part, act iii., scene 2, is the passage—

"Come, basilisk,
And kill the innocent gazer with thy sight."

112. This idea of the temporary loss of the joys of Elysium is a favourite one with the Persian poets, and is reproduced, it will be remembered, in Moore's quasi-Persian "Paradise and the Peri," commencing—

"One morn a Peri at the gate
Of Eden stood, disconsolate;
And as she listen'd to the Springs
Of Life within, like music flowing,
And caught the light upon her wings
Through the half-open portal glowing,
She wept to think her recreant race
Should e'er have lost that glorious place."

113. The kingfisher, frequently called halcyon by the poets, from an old myth that the kingfisher bred out at sea, making a floating nest to rest upon the surface of the ocean; thus the halcyon days, days of peace and happiness, are those literally when even the sea was becalmed, as it was fabled to be, during the hatching of the young of the kingfisher. The word

halcyon is derived from two Greek words meaning the sea and to rear. In "King Lear" we find the following passage:—

> "Renege, affirm, and turn their halcyon beaks
> With every gale and vary of their masters."

In many parts of the country it is the custom to hang up a dead kingfisher, from a belief that as it swings it will indicate the direction of the wind—a custom evidently known, as these lines show, to Shakspere.

114. The *Arundo Phragmites*, or common reed.

115. The reference here is evidently to the bright yellow central portion of the flower, which, surrounded by the radiating and white petals, may fancifully be said to resemble the eye, the central coloured circle in the midst of the white standing for the pupil.

116. "To spend time in writing a description hereof is altogether needless, it being so generally used by all the good housewives almost throughout this land to sweep their houses with, and therefore very well known to all sorts of people.—*Culpepper's Herbal.* The old author professes to head his account of the virtues of each plant with a description of it, but many of them are of the character given above; thus, in speaking of the ash tree he says—"This is so well known, that time will be misspent in writing a description of it." Barberry—"The shrub is so well known by every boy and girl that has but attained to the age of seven years, that it needs no description." Cherry—"I suppose there are few but know this tree for its fruit's sake, and therefore I shall spare writing a description thereof." White lilies—"It were in vain to describe a plant so commonly known in every one's garden, therefore I shall not tell you what they are, but what they are good for." Rye—"This is so well known in all the counties of this land, and especially to country people, who feed much upon it, that if I did but describe it, they would presently say I might have spared that labour." Woodbine—"It is a plant so common that every one that hath eyes knows it, and he that hath none cannot read a description if I should write it."

117. "Beautiful objects of the wild bee's love,
The wild bird joys your opening bloom to see."

Nicol.

118. Many of the titles bestowed upon the Virgin Mary by the Roman Catholic Church are very curious, some having legendary or historic interest, and others, the greater number, touchingly expressing the aspirations or

the sorrows of her votaries. A few examples of each of these may be given. As the patroness of the city of Messina, she is honoured as Santa Maria della Lettera, as, according to the belief of the citizens, she wrote a letter to the corporation, dated from Jerusalem, "in the year of her Son, 42." As the patroness of the City of Pisa, she holds in her hand the crown of thorns, and is to the Pisans Santa Maria della Spina. Numerous churches were dedicated to her in the Middle Ages, after the cessation of any plague; she is then Santa Maria della Salute, our Lady of Health. As Santa Maria della Sapienza, or della Perseveranza, words which need no translation, she was the patroness of colleges and other seats of learning.

To the needy, the helpless, the afflicted, or the prisoner, she is Santa Maria di Misericordia, our Lady of Mercy; Auxilium Afflictorum, Aid of the Afflicted; Refugium Pecatorum, Refuge of Sinners; or Santa Maria della Liberta, our Lady of Liberty.

119. Phœbus or Apollo, one of the twelve greater deities of Olympus, was the Sun-god, and as the creator of physical light was held in the greatest esteem by the classic people of antiquity. To this physical light was afterwards added mental light; hence he became the originator of thoughts of holiness, truth, moral purity, and righteous dealing in the hearts of men; hence, too, he became the god of music and song, the outflowings of the joyous spirit.

His oracles were consulted at Delphi by all those who needed his light for their guidance, and the pythian games were there each fifth year celebrated in his honour, to commemorate the slaying by him of the python, a monster of darkness who had made the oracle at Delphi inaccessible, typifying the victory of the good principle over the evil, and the dissipation of darkness and ignorance by the rays of heaven's light. Apollo is on this account sometimes called Pythios.

120. Laverock or lark. Its joyous music floating down from the sky, when the bird itself is almost or quite invisible from the height to which it has soared, renders it one of our most delightful songsters.

> "Hark, hark! the lark at heaven's gate sings,
> And Phœbus 'gins arise."
>
> *Shakspere.*

> "Join voices all ye living souls: ye birds
> That singing up to heaven's gate ascend,
> Bear on your wings and in your notes his praise."
>
> *Milton.*

"Of all birds to whom is given dominion over the air, the lark alone lets loose the power that is in his wings only for the expression of love and gratitude."—*Christopher North.*

"Up springs the lark,
Shrill-voic'd and loud, the messenger of morn;
Ere yet the shadows fly, he, mounted, sings
Amid the dawning clouds."

Thomson.

"Singing, singing,
With all the heavens about thee ringing."

Wordsworth.

121. Merle or blackbird. In French, *merle*; in Latin, *merula*. The "Noontide Bower" of Burns is suggested again in the line of Thomson—

"The blackbird whistles from the thorny brake."

With other old writers, as in the following extract from the "Midsummer Night's Dream," the blackbird is

"The ousel-cock so black of hue,
With orange-tawny bill."

122. The mavis or song-thrush. In French, *mauvis*.

123. "Amongst the many buds proclaiming May,
Decking the fields in holiday array,
Striving who shall surpass in braverie,
Marke the faire flowering of the hawthorne tree,
Who, finely clothèd in a robe of white,
Fills full the wanton eye with May's delight."

Chaucer.

124. The sloe or blackthorn, a plant whose blossoms appear in the early spring before the bursting of its leaves, the whole plant, from the profusion of its blossoms, telling at a little distance as an almost unbroken mass of white.

125. Bion, a Greek satiric philosopher of the Cyrenaic sect. Moschus, an orator and writer. They flourished about the year 270 B.C. The Doric dialect, used by the Spartans, Sicilians, Rhodians, Cretans, and Dorians, and met with in the works of Pindar; Archimedes, and Theocritus, was one of the four dialects in use in Greece, the others being the Æolic, the Ionic—of which the writings of Herodotus are an example—and the Attic, the dialect used by Plato, Xenophon, Demosthenes, Thucydides, and many other celebrated writers.

126. Though eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the glories of the celestial Paradise, the following thoughts of Thomas à Kempis are so full of beautiful feeling that they will well repay our perusal—

"Oh, how beautiful that region,
And how fair that heavenly legion,
Where thus men and angels blend!
Glorious will that city be,
Full of deep tranquillity,
Light and peace from end to end;
All the happy dwellers there
Shine in robes of purity,
Bound in firmest unity.
Labour finds them not, nor care,
Ignorance can ne'er perplex,
Nothing tempt them, nothing vex;
Joy and health their fadeless blessing,
Always all things good possessing.
Sweetest strains from soft harps stealing,
Trumpet notes of triumph pealing,
Radiant wings and white robes gleaming,
Up the steps of glory streaming,
Where the heavenly bells are ringing,
Holy, holy, holy! singing
To the mighty Trinity!
Holy, holy, holy! crying;
For all earthly care and sighing
In that city cease to be."

127. *Ce n'est pas toujours Mai*, French proverb.

128. Harlock, another name for the wild mustard.

129. A species of grass.

130. Theocritus, a Greek poet about 270 B.C.

131. The gentle spirit is alone able thoroughly to enjoy the delights of nature; and, on the other hand, those delights themselves have a soothing and refining effect if there be ought of sympathy in the mind influenced by them. Whosoever has visited the Leasowes in Warwickshire, the home of Shenstone, will have felt the force and propriety of the inscription which the poet placed on the threshold of his domain—

"Would you, then, taste the tranquil scene,
Be sure your bosom be serene;
Devoid of hate, devoid of strife,
Devoid of all that poisons life;

And oh, how fitting in this place
To cherish love for all man's race."

132. Keats introduces it in a very similar sense—

"No flower amid the garden fairer grows
Than the sweet lily of the lowly vale,
The queen of flowers."

133. Moore employs this idea, the discovery of hidden plants by their fragrance, in the following passage:—

"'Twas midnight, through the lattice wreathed
With woodbine, many a perfume breathed
From plants that wake when others sleep;
From timid jasmine buds that keep
Their odour to themselves all day;
But when the sunlight dies away,
Let the delicious secret out
To every breeze that roams about."

134. We have in Britain three species of dodder; the greater dodder, botanically termed the *Cuscuta Europæa*, parasitic on nettles, thistles, and many other herbaceous plants, but not very commonly met with; the lesser dodder, *C. Epithymum*, frequently met with in open sunny situations on furze, heath, thyme, and other small plants; and the flax dodder, *C. Epilinum*, parasitic on flax alone, very commonly to be met with on the continent, and introduced into England with the cultivation of the flax; a very destructive plant to the crop.

Cowley, therefore, has dwelt only on the clinging dependence of the dodder, not finding it poetically convenient to state the injury this parasitic growth inflicts on the plants exposed to it. The poetic view may be summarised as the greater the ruin the greater the adherence, faithful unto death; while the botanical truth, in brief, points a moral the reverse of this—the greater the adherence the greater the ruin, the speedier the death of the plant involved in the apparently feeble grasp of its destroyer.

135. The *crocus nudiflorus*, or naked crocus, so called from its blossoms being thrown up from the ground in autumn after the leaves of the year have withered, and before the development of those of the following year. Nothing, therefore, is seen but the flower. Paley, in his *Natural Theology*, employs this curious plant as an illustration of what is termed compensation. He says—"I have pitied this poor plant a thousand times. Its blossom rises out of the ground in the most forlorn condition possible;

without a sheaf, a fence, a calyx, or even a leaf to protect it: and that, not in the spring, not to be visited by summer suns, but under all the disadvantages of the declining year. When we come, however, to look more closely into the structure of this plant, we find that, instead of its being neglected, nature has gone out of her course to provide for its security, and to make up to it for all its defects. The seed-vessel, which in other plants is situated within the cup of the flower, or just beneath it, in this plant lies buried ten or twelve inches under ground within the bulbous root. The tube of the flower, which is seldom more than a few tenths of an inch long, in this plant extends down to the root. The stiles in all cases reach the seed-vessel; but it is, in this, by an elongation unknown to any other plant. All these singularities contribute to one end. As this plant blossoms late in the year, and probably would not have time to ripen its seeds before the access of winter, which would destroy them, Providence has contrived its structure such, that this important office may be performed at a depth in the earth out of reach of the usual effects of frost. The maturation of the impregnated seed, which in other plants proceeds within a capsule, exposed together with the rest of the flower to the open air, is here carried on, and during the whole winter, within the heart, as we may say, of the earth. But then a new difficulty presents itself. Seeds, though perfected, are known not to vegetate at this depth in the earth. Our seeds, therefore, though so safely lodged, would after all be lost to the purpose for which all seeds are intended. Lest this should be the case, a second admirable provision is made to raise them above the surface when they are perfected, and to sow them at a proper distance, viz., the germs grow up in the spring upon a fruit stalk, accompanied with leaves. The seeds now, in common with those of other plants, have the benefit of the summer, and are sown upon the surface. The order of vegetation externally is this—the plant produces its flowers in September, its leaves and fruits in the spring following."

136. The two common species of dead nettle are here referred to—the *Lamium album*, the white archangel blind nettle or dead nettle, with its blossoms of creamy white, and the little *Lamium purpureum*, or red archangel blind nettle or dead nettle, having blossoms of a purplish red. The names blind or dead nettle are applied to them to express their harmless nature, and to distinguish them from the plant called the nettle *par excellence*, whose stinging propensities are too well known to render any description of the plant so armed at all necessary. The stinging nettle,

Urtica dioica, is not related to the dead nettles, the latter only sharing the name from a certain similarity of form in the foliage of the respective plants.

137. The green hellebore, *Helleborus viridus*, and the fœtid hellebore, or bear's foot, *H. fœtidus*, are the two plants referred to; the corolla is in each species small and almost hidden by the stamens; those parts that appear to be the petals are really the segments of the calyx. In the first species named these parts are large and of a yellowish green; in the second they are green, tinged at their tips with purple.

138. "And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so.

"And the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind; and God saw that it was good."—*Genesis* i. 11, 12.

139. Some being, like the borage, star-like; some cup-like, or in the form of a bell; some like the various kinds of orchis, imitating animal forms, as in the bee-orchis. "At the top grow the flowers, resembling in shape the dead carkasse of a Bee. There is no great use of them in physicke, but they are chiefly regarded for the pleasant and beautifull flowers, wherewith Nature hath seemed to play and disport herself."—*Gerarde.*

Langhorne notes the accuracy of the deception in the following lines on the bee-orchis:—

"See on that flowret's velvet breast,
How close the busy vagrant lies!
His thin-wrought plume, his downy breast,
The ambrosial gold that swells his thighs.

"Perhaps his fragrant load may bind
His limbs; we'll set the captive free!
I sought the living bee to find,
And found the picture of a bee."

144. The attachment of plants to certain localities is a very noticeable feature, some being, like the poppy and blue-bottle especially, found in corn-fields; some, like the wall-flower and stone-crop, being found on old ruins; some, like the cowslip and the ladies'-smock, in the open meadow; some, like the king-cup and the bog-pimpernel, being characteristic plants of the marsh; some, like the lily and the arrowhead, being

found in the quiet stream; some, like the gorse and broom, especially to be met with on the open common; some, like the yellow horned-poppy or the sea-holly, being only plants of the sea-shore. The latter, the *Eryngium maritimum* of science, is selected by Drummond in the following passage as an especially characteristic feature of the maritime Flora—

"Th' Eryngo here
Sits as a queen among the scanty tribes
Of vegetable race.
Here the sweet rose would die; but she imbibes,
From arid sand and salt-sea dew-drops, strength:
The native of the beach, by nature formed
To dwell among the ruder elements."

Other common plants of the littoral waste are thus introduced by Merritt—

"The marsh is bleak and lonely. Scarce a flower
Gleams in the waving grass. The rosy Thrift
Has paler grown since summer blessed the scene;
And the Sea Lavender, whose lilac blooms
Drew from the saline soil a richer hue
Than when they grew on yonder towering cliff,
Quivers in flowering greenness to the wind.
No sound is heard, save when the sea-bird screams
Its lonely presage of the coming storm;
And the sole blossom which can glad the eye
Is yon pale starwort nodding to the wind."

141. Of whom old Deckar quaintly and touchingly writes—

"The best of men
That e'er wore earth about him, was a sufferer;
A soft, meek, patient, humble, tranquil spirit;
The first true gentleman that ever breathed."

142. "I saw also, that the Interpreter took him again by the hand, and led him into a pleasant place, where was builded a stately palace, beautiful to behold; at the sight of which Christian was greatly delighted. He saw also, upon the top thereof, certain persons walking, who were clothed all in gold. Then the Interpreter took him, and led him towards the door of the palace; and behold, at the door stood a great company of men, as desirous to go in, but durst not. There also sat a man at a little distance from the door, at a table-side, with a book and his ink-horn before him, to take the name of him that should enter therein; he saw also, that in the doorway stood many men in armour to keep it, being resolved to do the men that would enter what hurt and mischief they could. At last, when every man

started back for fear of the armed men, Christian saw a man of a very stout countenance come up to the man that sat there to write, saying, 'Set down my name, sir;' the which when he had done, he saw the man draw his sword, and put an helmet upon his head, and rush toward the door upon the armed men, who laid upon him with deadly force; but the man, not at all discouraged, fell to cutting and hacking most fiercely. So after he had received and given many wounds to those that attempted to keep him out, he cut his way through them all and pressed forward into the palace, at which there was a pleasant voice heard from those that were within, even of them that walked upon the top of the palace, saying—

'Come in, come in;
Eternal glory thou shalt win.'

So he went in, and was clothed with garments such as they."—*Pilgrim's Progress.*

143. "Each moss,
Each shell, each crawling insect, holds a rank
Important in the plan of Him who fram'd
This scale of beings; holds a rank, which lost,
Would break the chain, and leave behind a gap
Which Nature's self would rue."

Stillingfleet.

"The chain that's fixèd to the throne of Jove,
On which the fabric of our world depends,
One link dissolved, the whole creation ends."

Waller.

"From Nature's chain, whatever link you strike,
Tenth or ten-thousandth, breaks the chain alike."

Pope.

144. As expressed in the fine hymn of Addison—

"The spacious firmament on high,
With all the blue ethereal sky,
And spangled heavens, a shining frame,
Their great Original proclaim:
Th' unwearied sun from day to day,
Does his Creator's power display,
And publishes to every land
The work of an Almighty hand.

"Soon as the evening shades prevail,
The moon takes up the wondrous tale,
And nightly to the list'ning earth,
Repeats the story of her birth;
Whilst all the stars that round her burn,
And all the planets in their turn,
Confirm the tidings as they roll,
And spread the truth from pole to pole.

"What though in solemn silence all
Move round this dark terrestrial ball!
What though no real voice nor sound
Amid their radiant orbs be found!
In Reason's ear they all rejoice,
And utter forth a glorious voice,
For ever singing as they shine,
'The hand that made us is Divine.'"





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